IN SEARCH OF DEAFHOOD :

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING

OF BRITISH DEAF CULTURE

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines whether Deaf communities of the world manifest a distinctive culture of their own. Utilising the theories and methods of critical ethnography, augmented by the reflexive sociology of Bourdieu and the discourse theories of Foucault, it examines the construction and treatment of those communities by those in positions of power over them.

Focusing on the British Deaf community and the two originating sites of its culture, the residential school and the Deaf club, the study then utilises post-colonial theories from the Subaltern Studies movement to correlate social groups and cultural patterns within that community.

The development of the concept of the subaltern-researcher, operating out of the experiential insights gained from membership of the community under study, also assists in the consequent location of the Deaf subaltern and some of their core beliefs, actions and values

The findings emphasise the importance of locating and understanding diachronic dimensions of culture and of situating and accounting for socio-cultural diversity. These contribute to a theoretical framework within which Deaf culture might be situated, and offer new distinctions within cultural theory to assist the development of a theoretical category of minority cultures.

The study concludes with the suggestion that recognition of Deaf culture presents an important new dimension with major implications for those controlling such domains as Deaf education, television, social welfare and organisations both 'for' and 'of' Deaf people. Recognition also has implications for the awareness and self-respect of Deaf communities themselves, and for re-generative strategies which Deaf organisations might employ.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to three Deaf women who inspired and taught me more than even Signs can show:

To Dorothy Miles - whose vision of Deafhood will only be realised in the years to come.

To Marie Philip - your wisdom showed how an unsung comrade-in-arms can also be a hero to her peers.

and

To Gloria Pullen - this is all your doing! I hope I have lived up to your standards!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This decade-long journey into Deaf culture owes its beginnings to Carol Erting and Harlan Lane, who sowed the original seeds before the 'Deaf Way' conference in 1989. Important groundwork was laid during my tenure in the Powrie V. Doctor Chair of Deaf Studies at Gallaudet University in 1992-3, and my thanks are extended to Mike Karchmer, Carol Erting and those whose efforts funded this Chair, for helping to make this possible. Thanks are also due to so many Deaf and hearing people for their contributions during this time - unfortunately I cannot name you all since many of you have made contributions to the ongoing document from this period which will one day be published. Your interest in and recognition of me was more valuable than you may ever know. Finally, I cannot overlook the importance of the contribution from my companion during those years, Bren Marshall.

A subaltern-researcher cannot draw an artificial line to exclude the knowledge acquired in their native life prior to the study, since those insights inform the study itself. As the Black communities are fond of emphasising, our own elevated position comes from standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before us.

My thanks therefore are due to many people who informed that journey from 1974 onwards. In chronological order then, to Betty Langford, Caroline Taylor, and the members of the Hillingdon Deaf Youth Club who gave me my name sign and my first acceptance in Deaf society. To my comrades-in-arms at the National Union of the Deaf, especially Raymond Lee, Maggie Woolley and Linda Richards, and to my 'Deaf parents' Arthur and Jean Dimmock who exemplified what a proud Deaf people from the 'Golden Age' might have been like.

Numerous individuals during the era of the `Deaf Resurgence' also made major contributions which influenced this study. Thanks are due in particular to Arthur Verney, Doug Alker, Harlan Lane, Wendy Daunt, Lorna Allsop and Mika Brojer. I wish space permitted me to name everyone else, but I must also thank all who worked on or assisted the London Deaf Video Project between 1985 and 1992.

This present study itself owes much to the original urgings of Gloria Pullen; deep thanks are due for this and for support during the work. Harriet Davies gave it perspective, experience and encouragement - without which it would probably never have been finished. Alys Young was also a wonderful source of insights, suggestions and support throughout. I also greatly valued the support of my other graduate colleagues, notably Mary Griggs, Helen Reed and Sally Reynolds. Australian colleagues Jan Branson and Don Miller provided key insights at an important time. The interest, support and encouragement of staff and students at the Centre for Deaf Studies was also very much appreciated, and I must also thank my supervisor Jim Kyle for numerous useful contributions.

This study would of course be nothing without the many wonderful responses from my Deaf and hearing informants and conversationalists - unfortunately you have chosen to remain anonymous, but you know who you are! Thanks are also due to Bristol Deaf Centre's Senior Citizens Group, and to David Kingdon and Len Wyatt for their support there.

For recognition and support in life outside the study, without which it can be hard to find the strength to persevere, I must thank Lori Abrams, Judi Derisley, Steve Knapp, Jake Frost, Elaine Heller, Sue Edgley, Ann Molyneux and Sheila Cragg.

The nature of a PhD presentation requires that only the `certainties' and verities are recorded, creating an illusion of confidence and savoir-faire to those reading from the outside. In reality, the work is characterised by days, weeks, months and even years of indecision and self-doubt. These stresses take their toll on one's `real life' outside the work. In recording this, I wish therefore to express my love, affection and regret to Jo Smith, Gemma and Poppy, for the difficulties caused by these stresses.

Finally, I am also grateful to the Economic and Social Research Council for their funding which made this study possible. May it serve simply as a staging post on the journey from deafness to Deafhood for those alive now and for the Deaf generations to come.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work contained within this thesis is my own work, which has drawn upon the relevant literature and experiences of others in the manner customary to such theses. The view expressed in this dissertation are those of the author and not of Bristol University.

Signed: 

23rd December 1998

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Most of the terms and abbreviations used in this study are explained within the text. Comprehension, however, is easier if some art clarified from the start. These are grouped thematically rather than alphabetically for easier assimilation.

deaf / Deaf	The lower-case 'deaf' refers to those for whom deafness is primarily an audiological experience, whilst 'Deaf' refers to those for whom the sign language, community and culture of the Deaf collective is their primary experience and allegiance.
hearing / Hearing	The lower-case 'hearing' is a term originating in the Deaf community to describe non-Deaf people (including 'deaf' people). I have sometimes capitalised this to indicate an additional dimension expressed by Deaf people - for example, 'Hearing world' or 'Hearing ways'.
oralist / Oralism	Oralism can be defined as the educational system imposed on Deaf communities worldwide over the last century which sought to remove the adult Deaf community and its sign language from the Deaf education system. I have capitalised the concept itself to reflect the additional dimensions of meaning given to the term by Deaf people, much as Black communities have capitalised 'White' in certain situations.
PHU	Partially-Hearing Units were created in the 1960s in order to move Deaf children with more hearing into a class of their own in hearing schools. Later oralists moved profoundly Deaf children into these classes. Such developments were highly unpopular in the Deaf community, as they fragmented it and isolated the new generations from their traditions and culture.

'DEAF-HIS'	British Sign Language (BSL) orthography requires that the quotation of key phrases be rendered in capitals, hyphenated when appropriate, as in this example.
HMFD	Hearing children of Deaf parents have a unique status within Deaf communities. The abbreviation refers to the BSL term used to describe them - 'HEARING, MOTHER-FATHER DEAF'.
WOD	An abbreviation of 'Welfare Officers to the Deaf', and a generic term used to describe the missioners and later the welfare officers who ran Deaf local and national affairs in the post-oralist era.
BDDA	Established in 1890, partly to combat oralism, by Deaf and hearing people, the BDDA (later BDA) is the primary national representative of the Deaf community. However, following the oralist hegemony, hearing missioners gained control and the organisation only became Deaf-run in the 1990s.
BDSC	The British Deaf Sports Council represented the first sustained attempt by the missioners to control Deaf sport.
SDDASA	The Southern Region Deaf and Dumb Sports Association was one of the regional bodies established and run by Deaf subaltern prior to the establishment of the BDSC.
SHED	The Society for Higher Education of the Deaf was a campaign group established in the later 1940s to campaign for Deaf access to higher education, which culminated in the establishment of the MHGS (see below).

MHGS	The apex of the UK's oralist system, the Mary Hare Grammar School, has had a significant effect on the post-war Deaf community, and is often represented by this abbreviation.
NUD	Established in 1976 as a Deaf-run pressure group to combat oralism and the missioner hegemony, the NUD succeeded in accelerating change across the board within and without the community.

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INTRODUCTION

The question of whether the sign language-using communities of Deaf people in the UK (and throughout the world) have bona-fide cultures of their own occupies a cutting edge in contemporary discourses about 'deafness'. Such debate is not merely academic, but has serious implications for the lives and welfare of millions of Deaf people across the world. These implications also have direct relevance for 'hearing' people whose lives are either personally or professionally involved with Deaf people, for deafened and disabled people, and for organisations and bodies charged with responsibility for Deaf people, including local, central and international governments.

1.1 SITUATING MYSELF WITHIN THE STUDY

I was born deaf into a working-class family during the post-war intensification of 'Oralism' (see glossary) and placed in mainstream education from the age of 4 through to the end of my first university degree. Isolated from contact with other Deaf people, the experience resulted in 'academic success' but was traumatic socially and emotionally (Ladd, 1979). Upon leaving college, I found that my applications to become a teacher of the Deaf were rejected on the grounds of my deafness, although the same people had stressed throughout my education the aralist doctrine that I 'was not deaf, but a hearing person who could not hear' (*ibid*). The realisation that I had been deceived was a crucial epiphany in realising how Oralism had manipulated me.

During the following period of 3 years social work with Deaf children and their families, it became clear that this manipulation was part of a national pattern which had existed for almost 100 years and was continuing to damage the educational, social, and emotional health of those I encountered in my work. I was fortunate in entering this profession at a time when Oralism was beginning to be questioned, and began to seek out other d/Deaf people who wished to challenge this status quo. This resulted in the

formation of the Deaf-run pressure group, the National Union of the Deaf, in which I was active for the next 10 years.

Having grown up in isolation from other Deaf people, I found it an immense personal challenge to confront and shed aspects of my personal Oralist conditioning, even as I intellectually rejected its raison d'etre. However by perseverance and proven commitment, I came to gradually be accepted by Deaf people, and simultaneously began to accept their very different worldview and history, thus moving from 'deaf' (i.e. the condition of situating my world-view around audiological perspectives) to 'Deaf' (situating it around cultural and linguistic perspectives) during that process.

A crucial personal breakthrough which has subsequently informed all my life actions occurred earlier when I attended university during the tail-end of the 'hippie'-movement of the late 1960s (Roszak, 1971). In contrast to my mainly negative experience of hearing people as represented by grammar schoolboys, I found the hippie-oriented students to be open-minded and interested in human differences rather than contemptuous of them. Entering college at such a time was serendipitious, and is one that very few other Deaf people in the UK have had the opportunity to experience.

Of equal importance were the intellectual, political and spiritual philosophies of that era; my exposure to them made it possible almost overnight to question and reject the entire conservative base on which my self-image had ben founded, and to embrace a worldview that can be summed up in four essential tenets. One was the realisation of the existence of 'invisible' ruling-class discourses which represented themselves as 'reality'; another was the realisation of the damage these caused to a wide range of oppressed minorities who did not fit into that reality, together with the more subtle damage caused to those who acquiesced in it. The third was the desire to conceive of alternative realities which might serve society better, and the fourth was to work to achieve those realities.

My subsequent work over the following 20 years within Deaf communities locally, nationally and internationally has been focused around those four tenets. This process

has combined more conventional political and social activism with attempts to innovate processes rooted in the conception of alternative realities, and has been underpinned by further academic degrees in the fields of linguistics and Cultural Studies, the latter stimulating my interest in theorising Deaf culture. It also proved important in understanding the role of class in society and in reclaiming my own working class experience, which was temporarily suppressed or ignored during the hippie era.

1.2 CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Critical ethnography offers a very useful theoretical framework for the present study. Ethnography itself is a set of methodologies developed by anthropologists and sociologists to study and represent cultures and communities within their own terms of reference (cf Spindler and Spindler, 1992). However, due to the inherent pro-academy bias built into such research, critical ethnographers have sought to develop theories and methodologies which address and redress these (Quantz, 1992).

Simon and Dippo (1986) define critical ethnography as being founded upon three essential tenets:

1. The work must employ an organising method which defines one's data and analytical procedures in a way consistent with its project.

2. It must be situated in part within a public sphere that allows it to become the starting point for the critique and transformation of the conditions of oppressive and inequitable moral and social regulation.

3. It must address the limits of its own claims by a consideration of how, as a form of social practice, it too is constituted and regulated through historical relations of power and existing material conditions (p.197).

Partly because of its focus on social inequity, critical ethnography has been accused of bias. Its response is to critique the ways in which traditional social sciences have not

only been mistaken in assuming an objective, value-free hermeneutic tradition, but points out that this tradition in fact contains its own hidden biases which reflect cultural power structures. To transcend issues surrounding bias, it is necessary to make transparent all aspects of the research project, including the wider historical and power-structural factors which lie beneath or behind the project itself. This process begins with 1.1 above, and continues below and in Chapter 2.

Critical ethnography is also strongly concerned with verification processes and theories. Six strategies feature prominently (Lather, 1986). Of these, triangulation, respondent validation and judgment sampling emanate from traditional ethnography, whilst reflexive subjectivity, catalytic validity, and typicality are particular to critical ethnography. These are described below; reflections on their use in this study are presented at the end of the chapter.

1. Respondent Validation

Some ethnographers argue that a crucial aspect of verification, is, as Hammersley and Atkinson put it: '... whether the actors whose beliefs and behaviour they purport to describe recognize the validity of those accounts' (1991: 195). Although assessing such recognition is complex and problematic, it is nonetheless important as a guiding principle.

2. Triangulation

Respondent validation represents one form of triangulation, which can be described as the principle of checking inferences from one set of data by collecting data from other domains (Hammersley and Atkinson, *ibid*). Two primary manifestations of this are: methodological triangulation, in which data is cross-checked after being collected through a variety of methods, and data triangulation, where the cross-checking process takes place after data is collected from different actors within the arena of study.

3. Reflexive Subjectivity and Transparency

Simon and Dippo (1986: 200) summarise the principle of reflexive subjectivity thus:

> We need to recognise our own implication in the production of data and must thus begin to include ourselves (our own practices and their social and historic basis) in our analyses of the situations we study.

However, Bourdieu (1992) asserts that it would be optimistic to imagine that a researcher would be able to identify and account for all the external forces and internal impulses acting upon them, and that there is thus a danger of producing 'individualist' texts. He insists that particular attention must thus be given to the underlying limitations imposed by the various fields and domains of power, especially with reference to academic or intellectual bias. Such a target is highly challenging and still rarely achieved. Nevertheless, pursuing maximum transparency within reflexivity enables me to expose my intellectual and emotional motivations and analyses, so that others can identify factors, connections and issues overlooked by this self-accounting.

4. Typicality

Although it is a central tenet of social sciences that data sampling must aspire to minimise bias, the particular nature of critical ethnography is such that additional caution must be employed. Since such work is concerned with 'assisting' marginalized groups to express their perspectives and beliefs, one must always seek to check the degree of typicality of such beliefs among group members, and thus avoid homogenising or over-determining the responses.

5. Judgment Sampling

Sampling procedures are also a tenet of social science in general. However, insufficient attention is sometimes paid to the larger social picture within which the sampling takes place. Sometimes participant-observation has reflected insufficiently on the partially-subconscious processes by which such information is collected; it has not always

examined the social status and relationships of the informants within their own society, and the effect that this has on the data. Judgment sampling seeks to render this process more transparent by illustrating the basis on which those observed or interviewed were selected. It also seeks to balance 'introspective' and 'intuitive' aspects of ethnography by drawing such subconscious assumptions to the surface for reflection.

6. Catalytic Validity

This requires that the praxis and results of the research study should have positive effects for the group studied. These range from a greater awareness among group members, through increased self-confidence and greater involvement in their society, to the ideal described by Simon and Dippo as a group who are:

> 'in a position to use ethnographic work as a resource ... for [its] ability to clarify the basis of everyday life and the possibilities for its transformation' (p.199).

Each of these principles were employed in the research and are discussed below where appropriate.

1.3 SUBALTERN-RESEARCHER STATUS AND IMPLICATIONS

Research on oppressed communities and cultures has rarely developed descriptive terms for those such groups other than the class-oriented terminology of Marxism. However, recent developments in Post-Colonial Studies offer useful theoretical concepts for this study. The work of Said (1978) and Fanon (1968, 1986) suggests that the experience of Deaf communities resembles the patterns found within colonialism, here defined as unequal power relations between groups within which 'one not only controls and rules the other, but also endeavours to *impose its cultural order* onto the subordinate group' (Merry, 1991, my italics).

Within post-colonialism, the concept of *subaltern* groups as represented by the work of Guha and colleagues (1982) and Spivak (1996) is especially useful. Taking its cue from

Gramsci's definition of the subaltern as a collective description of dominated groups which lack explicit class-consciousness, the Subaltern Studies movement (1982-87) theorises a distinction between the resisting discourses and actions developed by intellectual elites and those taken by 'grass roots', or subaltern movements, which are largely discounted by such elites. Since only the former discourses have been recorded, the result is a partial and therefore inaccurate representation of the resisting culture. This has particular relevance for post-independence where that elite gains the power to control its own society according to its own ideologies, which may continue to exclude the subaltern experience.

'Enabling the subaltern to speak', therefore is a priority for studies of cultures which are concerned to challenge definitions of academic validity constructed around traditional discourses. This is particularly apposite for Deaf communities and others with a marked divide between the viewpoints of those few members literate in the language of the majority culture, and the majority who are not.

The subaltern concept also offers another possibility for correcting academic bias. Almost all social science theory is predicated on an academic distinction between the researcher and the researched 'Other'. There are virtually no conceptual terms or theories which are predicated on members of the Other as researchers of their own communities. The term *subaltern-researcher* thus becomes extremely useful both as a theoretical and methodological concept, and as a step towards satisfying Bourdieu's requirements above. However, it should be noted that not even subaltern studies posits the subaltern-as-researcher. I develop it here as a working basis for my own methodological and epistemological principles.

To be a subaltern-researcher therefore means to come to the area of study with an experiential knowledge of one's community. The basis for my own experience and knowledge has been described in 1.1, whilst adoption of catalytic validity requires that I had to refer to this knowledge to introspect and prioritise the political needs of the community. It was this interpretation of those needs which then influenced how the first stage of the study should be carried out.

This has two major implications. The first was that over the previous four years I had become known in the community as someone studying and writing about Deaf culture. As a result, I was asked by some Deaf people if I would either 'write a book' or 'come and research' the subject. The reasons given indicated an awareness of the importance of Deaf culture both as a political tool in the struggle against 'Oralism' (see glossary) and for reinforcing changes towards Deaf-centred policies in workplaces like schools and colleges. Considerable anxiety and urgency was expressed either about the need to 'prove we have a culture', or whether this was 'another Hearing idea imposed on us'. Others asked me to do this within a doctoral study both to 'prove Deaf people can do it', and so that 'you can get a job where you can teach what you've learned'. (The significance of the latter assertion is explained in Chapter 2.) Most who made these requests were concerned that 'you tell them [those deemed to hold power relevant to Deaf communities] what the real Deaf people have been trying to say'. The signed term 'REAL-DEAF' here implies grass roots views.

All these factors, plus my own temperament (which space does not permit analysis of) led me to adopt these suggestions and to attempt both 'proof' of that culture and to speed up the process of its acceptance by concluding with a workable framework.

I had completed a preliminary study in the preceding year, during which I was based at Gallaudet University in Washington DC - the world's only Deaf university. From the data thus generated, I built working hypotheses for approaching the present study. I was also able to draw conclusions from the methodologies used in that research.

However, researching my own British community presented particular potential difficulties, as, like any other Deaf community member, I occupied a position with a history in the British Deaf community, which could affect the data collected. Many subaltern also see my position as one with status. The positive effects are considered below. Potentially negative ones included various types of reactions by informants to that status.

The important issue of where my own status places me within the Deaf 'elite / subaltern' dynamic is discussed in Chapter 2, following an account of the history and social structure of the Deaf community.

1.4 FIRST STAGE OF THE STUDY

Introspection based on experience and working hypotheses above formed one set of inputs into how to theorise Deaf culture. However, in order to orient myself towards theories with maximum generalisability, I had to study the literature which existed, both on Deaf culture and on cultural theory in general. This is reviewed in Chapters 3 and 4.

After drawing on all the above inputs, there were four primary objectives for this first stage:

(i) To understand the cultural relevance of social groupings within British Deaf culture.

(ii) To ascertain what differences historical change might make in conceptualising that culture.

(iii) To understand the role of individual dispositions and strategies within the culture.

(iv) To remain aware of any significant variables which might require pursuing.

1. Initial Strategies

I adopted a participant-observer approach in four domains. The first was my immediate working environment, a Deaf Studies department with a high percentage of Deaf staff and about 30 Deaf students, all interacting with hearing staff and students in many different ways, both inside and outside the university. Of especial importance was the fact that such a department was very new for the UK; there were thus many new perspectives for both Deaf and hearing people, resulting in visible cultural conflicts and misunderstandings on a daily basis, as well as a sense of cultural exploration.

The second was my involvement in the local Deaf club, I regularly visited the old people's Wednesday afternoon club, and the all-age open evening that night. Here my approach differed from many anthropologists, for I was not totally immersed in one single community. The reasons for this are of interest. One is that the limitations of conducting a PhD do not allow the same intensity of immersion. The second concerns my place in the wider Deaf community, where there were heavy demands made upon my time as one among very few national activists, which negatively affected the energy available for local involvement.

The third area was that national community. Although the demands made upon my time were heavy, there were advantages in that I was able to experience and informally test some of the cultural issues more widely and deeply.

For triangulation I utilised the written, video-recorded and televised Deaf media, as well as in historical texts and papers.

My starting point was to meet with and interview subaltern-elite (see 2.3) Deaf people whom I knew from experience to have strong views on some of the issues around Deaf culture. The four interviewed came from Deaf families; they would, I hoped, be able to shed light on what it meant to grow up in a family environment where to be Deaf was considered normal. In particular, they would be able to discuss multi-generational Deaf experience, which I intuitively felt was central to understanding Deaf culture.

One of the four had Deaf parents only. Three had an extensive network of Deaf grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. One was fifth generation Deaf, whilst another was sixth generation with Deaf children and grandchildren constituting an eight generation span.

All were white women, aged between 35 and 50, and one was Jewish, working at the time in the same organisation. Each had only obtained professional posts in the previous ten years; three had spent their formative years as housewives, on factory assembly lines, or in other manual work. Three had only recently undertaken a degree of

professional training; all therefore thought of themselves as 'ordinary Deaf people', though whether that opinion was shared by their community now that they had 'risen' in occupation is another matter. Two lived in their city of birth, whilst two came from London. All knew each other, though they socialised mainly according to their place of origin.

2. Initial Interviews

All those interviewed were known to me previously and were comfortable both talking with me and with the use of video cameras from their own work. They welcomed the opportunity to discuss the issues raised with another Deaf person; as Ann put it 'I'm always having to ask other Deaf people questions for my work; but no-one ever asks me for my views'. All wanted to explore what Deaf culture might mean, and on several occasions expressed their pleasure at having the chance to think things through; they were particularly pleased when spontaneously expressing views which they had not realised they had held.

They were also keen to further Deaf people's self-knowledge and development, and saw the research as an opportunity for them to actively participate in that process, thus bringing two aspects of catalytic validity simultaneously into play. All were highly aware and critical of the usual patterns of 'Hearing' research on Deaf people which saw them purely as subjects, and who 'never' made their resulting knowledge available to the Deaf community. They also trusted me in this regard.

Thus they were happy to be interviewed on subsequent occasions; the length of time for each person ranged from two to eight hours. Despite this, not all the question areas were covered.

The interviews were open-ended, but designed around a set of core question areas (see appendix). All were recorded on videotape and transcribed. In each situation I did not lead in with the questions of the list, but let the first topic arise spontaneously from our knowledge of each other and our past interaction, so that the atmosphere was more like

a natural 'Deaf' conversation. (This approach has been noted in Jones and Pullen (1992) as characteristic of Deaf culture.) Once the first topic had run its course, I selected a question from the list which most closely related to that topic; this 'flow' approach was repeated throughout the interview.

There were three basic question areas. One was to see what they thought about certain of the ideas commonly assumed by previous researchers to constitute Deaf culture. The second was to focus on the socio-cultural patterns and structures thrown up by the preliminary study. The third was to remain open to new areas thrown up by my ongoing observations and any that might emerge from these interviews. Throughout the remainder of the study, I had to reflect on my own knowledge and experience of Deaf life (and from discussions with other Deaf and hearing people), as to how how these three sets of questions might link with each other, and at which levels, allowing this to guide my strategies.

These areas yielded 4 themes and 22 questions on the core list, some of which were added following the initial interviews. These can be categorised as follows:

- 6 were questions about what the informants understood and felt about particular cultural terminology.
- 3 were questions arising from the problematic areas of conceptualising Deaf culture.
- 4 were questions about certain signs used in BSL which suggested cultural attitudes towards onesself or other Deaf people.
- 9 were questions about certain aspects of Deaf behaviour which I had noticed from my experience.

3. Discussion Forum

In order to further the spirit of collective enquiry described above, which served well in getting relaxed responses from the four individuals, I invited seven other Deaf people working in the Deaf Studies department to form a forum in order to examine typicality.

All were in the professional class; three were new to that class, while the other four had always held white-collar posts. Two had Deaf parents and relatives whilst the other five came from hearing families.

Two initial meetings were held, and the group were eager to continue this process. Indeed I noticed on several occasions that members of the forum were having further informal discussions about material which had come up in the meetings, during which further topics were discussed which they had never hitherto considered. It seemed clear that this form of research continued the process of catalytic validity, and had effects on its participants in ways that most research on Deaf people does not touch on.

Each meeting lasted an hour (a lunchtime session) and the topics were presented by Dorothy, one of the original four interviewed. They focused on material produced in those interviews which none of us had seen or considered before. I remained silent during the sessions, partly to make notes more easily, and partly to see how the material would flow without my influence.

Filming this group proved difficult, because the number of Deaf signers that can be easily 'read' and transcribed from videotape is two; three is difficult, and four upwards is nearly impossible. Thus the number of cameras involved and the synching up of tapes on different machines for the transcription process was particularly time-consuming. Indeed, the unwieldiness of this exercise served as a deterrent to organising further sessions, even though those involved wanted more.

This deterrent to future sessions was unfortunate in respect of my silence above, as I came to feel that if I had 'guided' the sessions by interjecting questions at specific points, the discussions could have been more focused.

4. Implications for the Second Stage

The interviews and forums generated data of so much richness, breadth and depth that it proved difficult to establish boundaries and limits for the rest of the study. Themes

completely new to me emerged; several appeared never to have been touched on in any Deaf-related literature, whether focused on culture or not. Some of these became so important that the rest of the study had either to incorporate them, or in some cases, shaped the rest of the study in their own right.

Of the two which were of greatest significance, one concerned the opening up of historical dimensions within Deaf culture. The other revealed the emergence of a dynamic within the culture which I term the 'deafness-Deafhood' dynamic - the internal tensions that inform and help shape Deaf behaviours and philosophies, which chiefly concern whether to orient onesself towards Deaf or 'Hearing' ways of being. Both were intertwined in their own complex set of dynamics..

Given the difficulties of defining Deaf culture at a time when all cultures are undergoing transformation, I decided to focus on the historical dimension and the two 'traditional' sites in which Deaf culture evolved - the eras when all Deaf people attended Deaf schools and then moved onto the clubs, and the manifestations of the dynamic above found therein.

1.5 SECOND STAGE STRATEGIES

The implications for the methodology were that I had to adopt a judgment sample strategy, and this was conducted as follows:

Initially I had to seek out Deaf people whom I knew from experience could contribute to the historical dimension, or who could lead me to others who could make such a contribution. This led me to interview some older Deaf people, including those with whom I made contact at the local old people's club. I also had to locate middle-aged Deaf people who were particularly historically-oriented. I also found it necessary to interview one hearing child of Deaf parents. Some of the respondents were chosen for their potential to speak in an articulate way to the subject, while for others it was a matter of painfully trying to draw them out about past Deaf life. It also became very important to read as much Deaf historical material as could be found in order to

triangulate some of the data that was being generated.

At the same time, I had to seek out Deaf people who could contribute to the Deafhood / deafness dynamic using similar strategies. Four main routes presented themselves from the data. The first necessitated locating Deaf people with 'strong Deaf' views. Most were middle aged, but one or two younger Deaf people with Deaf parents were also able to 'dig deep' and articulate some of their deeply held perspectives. The second required me to investigate several sites where such Deaf people were in the rare position of working with young Deaf children, to study how the process of transmitting their 'Deaf' ideas was shaped and developed by their self-reflections on such themes, and how this related to who and what shaped their own lives.

Aware of the extent to which cultural rules and traditions only emerged when such rules were broken (cf Garfinkel, 1967), led me to interview Deaf people already known to challenge these rules and traditions. The fourth, which emerged from the American data, concerned the signs of cultural fragmentation which began with the growth of a Deaf professional class. I decided to focus on the views of this class rather than the views of others towards them, partly because this introduced more complexity than the study could handle, and partly because, by selecting these from among the 'strong Deaf', aspects of self-division could be observed and discussed with those informants. In all of the above, I drew on my Deaf experience to pursue judgment sampling in locating the appropriate informants.

1.6 ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

At this point, one very obvious aspect of research with subaltern Deaf people became clear; that what are known as 'Strong Deaf' views had never been recorded in any depth, nor apparently, any attempt to let such people speak on their own terms. I attempted to encourage them to articulate the deeper cultural beliefs that gave them that strength and guided, shaped and motivated their daily actions.

I came more and more to feel that if I could locate forms and forums that simply

allowed them to express themselves and reveal the underlying beliefs, that the study could achieve catalytic validity in its own right. This was because (to give one example), Deaf education stood in great need of understanding the children from a Deaf-centred point of view. It became clear that revealing these 'Strong Deaf' insights could speed up this process.

Having pursued 'Strong Deaf' themes and individuals, I was then confronted with methodological issues surrounding typicality and variation. On the one hand, there was more than enough data to focus solely on expressing their insights. On the other, I felt an obligation to attempt a certain amount of typicality. Deciding on the latter course, I interviewed a number of Deaf people, mostly young, who were completing a Deaf Studies course, intending to glean a dual set of perspectives, loosely described as 'before and after'. Although a number of these interviews did not reveal much, others proved extremely rich, whilst others opened up further areas which had to be set aside in order to focus the study.

In considering typicality further, I felt that since I had examined the 'centre' of the Deaf community, it was also necessary to observe marginality, and its relationships with this centre. Consequently, I met with and interviewed younger 'hard-of-hearing' people on the fringe of the community to see how their perspectives on Deaf cultural life related to some of the realities that had been documented. At this point, I felt that the study was also risking becoming too 'thin', and decided to put aside other 'marginal' examples, although if they emerged in interviews, I allowed them to develop. It was with regret I had to set Black Deaf issues to one side, deciding that these were more easily investigated and contrasted when the 'traditional' British Deaf culture was better documented, although the Black Deaf dimension of the preliminary study had proved valuable in suggesting leads to be followed.

Thus, by the end of the study, I had formally interviewed 31 Deaf and hard of hearing people, ages ranging from 18 to 85, mostly coming from different parts of England. I had informal discussions with over 90 more.

1.7 THIRD STAGE STRATEGIES

Finally, I intended to test out some of the emerging data by bringing it back to the forum for discussion, and by giving lectures or facilitating some discussions based on the data, the results of which were in turn fed back into the study. Time did not permit the former, but the latter proved valuable.

Once the study reached its penultimate draft, I intended to satisfy the conditions of respondent validation by sending those who could read English the quotations I had taken from their interviews, and inviting comment. For those who were not comfortable with English, I intended to meet each again and either go through my translation of what they had said, or ask them to watch the video and comment further. The latter course proved difficult to achieve, as some had moved away and many lived a long way from my home base; thus time and money intervened to limit our contact. Additionally, since the penultimate draft was still being written and revised near to the closing date for submission, it was not always possible to seek out comment when the text could not easily be changed.

Another qualification concerns the use of video cameras. It was not practicable to use a second camera focused on myself, which meant that, unlike audiotaped interviews, it was not possible to study and analyse the way I framed my questions, and how that might have influenced the responses. It has been suggested that I could have included myself in the single camera shot, but I felt that this was seriously detrimental to an accurate analysis and rendition of the informants' *affect,* which I deemed as important as what was actually said.

Questions surrounding the feasibility or otherwise of developing an overarching framework were considered throughout but allowed centre place only in the last months, when all the data had been collected and final assimilation of the accumulated knowledge and experience occurred.

1.8 ADDITIONAL ISSUES

This being the first study of its kind, a tremendous amount of data was generated which could not be included in the final text without rendering the data too 'thin' to sustain the concepts presented. This included material which illustrated Deaf culture's national, international and diasporic dimensions, dynamics of present-day Deaf club life, and the different new social groupings in the community which illustrated important changes. However, these amplify the concepts presented in the data chapters rather than alter them qualitiatively.

Nevertheless, the special nature of researching the cultural features of a visuo-gestural language community produced some additional methodological issues.

1. Translation and Transcription Issues

Translation brought its own methodological considerations. One concerned the length of time necessary to transcribe the data. The implications of filming, translating and transcribing group data applied in a lesser degree to the single subject interviews. Each minute of sign communication required on average 10 minutes to initially translate and transcribe; this figure was at least double for a response considered for inclusion in the final drafts. The length of this process tended to act as a deterrent for conducting further interviews.

Similarly complex issues surrounded the nature of the translations themselves. Although transcription orthographies have now been conventionalised in sign language linguistics, there has been little printed discussion about translation (although in regard to other languages, see Hymes, 1974 and 1981; Gee *et al*, 1992).

This posed difficulties whenever the responses from Deaf participants required more than a 'flat' English rendering of what was signed. Since the data I had collected was often passionately expressed, and sometimes metaphorically and poetically rendered, I faced the possibility of actual mistranslation if the affect was not properly captured in

English. Yet without any conventionally agreed strategies for so doing, or even suggestions and guidance, it proved difficult to move beyond subjectivity.

In many cases, I was satisfied with my renderings. But in others I was less sure that it was possible to capture the passion and beauty, or the poetical and metaphorical depths of the responses in English without having to quote at considerable length. This then negatively affected the amount of data which could be quoted, and thus *the number of themes that the reporting chapters could handle, and the depth of the coverage*. This in turn posed difficulties for rendering the total 'picture' in sufficient depth, or for capturing each stage requiring explication which built up to the final picture. Because deafness is such an unknown field, and the subject under investigation radically new, the limitations imposed on the explication were particularly frustrating and challenging. This particularly affected the aim of rendering the 'structure of feeling' of Deaf cultural life.

I identified five characteristics of the data which contributed to these methodological problems:

(i) Deaf culture and BSL is particularly strong in descriptive detail, storytelling being a major way of making points. (Some commentators including Foley (1988) have drawn attention to the prominence of storytelling in informal social settings, and the parallels with other 'oral' cultures.) Some of this detail proved difficult to shorten without failing to do justice to the full depths of what was said.

(ii) A related theme, the detail involved in what are almost literally 'theatrical' re-enactments of key moments, proved especially difficult to render in full without absorbing large chunks of the available word-space. Direct speech dialogue 're-enactments' were particularly common.

(iii) Repetition is also a feature of sign languages, and many oral cultures (Gee, 1989c; Edwards and Sienkewicz, 1991). Removing them 'hurts' the underlying sense of the texts.

(iv) One feature of sign languages rarely remarked upon is the ability to create new

lexical items and metaphors on the spot, many of them extremely 'clever', which may or may not be used again in the future. To merely translate the sense of these does a disservice to the text, and, as with the other points described here, ultimately produces translations that are affectively, and thus ultimately, inaccurate.

(v) Lengthy poetical responses, which to the native-researcher are extremely beautiful, but which would not necessarily be seen in this way by outsiders (cf. Blauner, 1987). To explicate the importance of such beauty also ate into the word-count.

Some of these issues occur in anthropological accounts of societies which couch their reponses in story, metaphor and symbol (Geertz, 1973). However, there appears to be little systematic discussion of translation issues as a methodological problem. And of course, these are all spoken languages which differ in fundamental ways from signed languages and their use of the visual domain and neurolinguistic processing channels.

In summary, the linguistic richness of the responses is a major part of Deaf culture, *representing part of its joie de vivre in the face of oppression*, and counterbalances the apparent negativity of some of the data. Capturing this adequately required much more space than is available.

Strategies of submitting the study partially in video form posed severe problems of confidentiality. Because of the wide variation in BSL dialects and idiolects, it is not easy for another native speaker to 'imitate' the excerpts, and this too still requires a breach of confidentiality. Presenting the study in this form is extremely rare, raising questions of assessment in the absence of a formal academic tradition (although see Myerhoff, 1980 and Rollwagen, 1988).

One other translation issue was of particular importance. Each respondent had their own idiolect, partly attributable to class and gender factors. Some also used more BSL than others, who used a BSL / Signed English mixture. The boundaries between these two concepts are themselves still a hotly debated issue. Thus the question also arose of

how to locate different English styles which might not be equivalent.

For some, it was tempting to use a particular kind of 'semi-English' which also reflected some BSL structures. However, it must be remembered that the study deals with an oppressed group, and to render excerpts in 'pidgin-english' is risky and also not necessarily supported by the respondents. Consistency was crucial; thus if half the respondents were happy with such a rendering and half not, the whole idea would have had to be abandoned and some other translation methodology devised. Often, the 'deep BSL' users that this was most relevant for did not have a confident enough grasp of English to check my translations, other than for basic meaning. Faced with this 'catch-22' situation, I compromised by discussing some of the more 'extreme' examples with those involved, and gaining their approval for their final versions.

Finally it should be noted that these issues added considerably to the amount of time required to process the data into its final form. I estimate that this brought the translation time up to one hour per one minute of data used.

2. Confidentiality Issues

These were unusually important. Since the Deaf community is small and closely-knit, it was all too easy to reveal the speaker by even the slightest piece of background information. Additionally, the majority of people likely to read the final text would be hearing people in Deaf work, some of whom might be in a position to oppress the Deaf persons they identified. Consequently, in circumstances where two sets of information could be pieced together to identify the person concerned, the only strategy I could devise was to divide responses from one person to create a second individual. Fortunately this was only necessary in one case.

3. Respondent Validation Issues

Respondent validation could have been handled differently if the scope of the study had been less wide, and this also affected the interviewing strategy. Spradley (1979)

considers it ideal to conduct 'cross-interviews' to tease out contradictions, ceasing to interview when the data is 'saturated' - ie generates nothing new. This was not possible with such a wide sample of respondents and range of subject matter, nor with the translation issues mentioned above.

When transcribing the data, I also noticed some informants had a negative attitude to subaltern Deaf people and to BSL, which came through in their signing *affect*. This made respondent validation difficult - where I had commented in the text on these attitudes, I had to decide whether to show them to the informants and risk their anger and withdrawal of co-operation / printing (Rubin, 1976), or whether to not do so and have them read them in the text later, constituting an act of betrayal. The ideal solution, to use my comments as a springboard for further discussion, was not possible due to time constraints.

I attempted to remedy this by interviewing central respondents again in the final year, consciously seeking out apparent contradictions or discontinuities. This was a partial solution at best, since this process continued to generate new data, which although it enabled further depths to be explored, could not always be accomodated in the final text. This methodological problem is not really dealt with in critical ethnography literature, where little consideration is given to word limits as a factor affecting the research.

Finally, I wished to allow each person to select their own pseudonym or even use their own name where desired. Although this is traditionally seen as undesirable, Myerhoff (1980) and others attest to many informants' desire not to be 'depersonalised', and a few did in fact wish to be identified by their own name.

4. Loss of Main Informant

The methodologies and strategies discussed above were greatly influenced by the loss of my main Deaf informant at a very early stage in the study. This person was unique in that she had lived in both the UK and the USA for over 20 years, had consciously studied both languages and cultures, created signed-art in both languages, and, unusually

for Deaf people, had studied both majority cultures. I would never have devised my particular strategies for researching Deaf culture if I had known she would not play a major role in it, as I had hoped to utilise her skills to help decide each round of strategies. Without her presence, the sophistication and subtlety of my methodology was greatly diminished.

Just before the third stage, another major informant died suddenly. This also had an impact on shaping the data. The further loss of a third person had less effect, but the cumulative stress of this affected the study. Although such setbacks occur to ethnographers who are not members of the groups they study, events such as these confirm the special nature of the methodological issues surrounding the subaltern-researcher.

5. Subaltern-Researcher Issues

The subaltern-elite dynamic is classically found within other minority discourses - the First Nation or Black person placed within majority education who becomes alienated and thus radicalised (Fanon, 1986), or the working-class 'scholarship boys' who became the founders of Cultural Studies (Hoggart, 1958; Williams, 1958).

Refinements of the above have been expressed, although not developed. Within anthropology, Hannerz (1992) questions typicality in asking 'which native's point of view' is being expressed, whilst Caulfield (1973) suggests that a native trained in the colonialist academy might be compromised by that training. Similar reservations have been posed within critical ethnography, where much of the work is still felt to be 'constrained by the language games of the academy' (Quantz, 1992: 469), whilst Corrigan (1989) questions whether breaking through such constraints will meet with academic recognition and advancement, and posits that awareness ofthis might act on the individual researcher.

Nevertheless, it can still be posited that the data in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 could not have been obtained by non-community members. Similarly, at this point in history, very few

Deaf people would have been able to do so, partly because of lack of access to higher education, and partly because of the truism that those fully inside a culture often take its basic tenets for granted, and think them not worth remarking upon. It seemed that my coming late to the community gave me a bi-cultural perspective which assisted the data collection.

Nevertheless, some methodological problems arose from my own status. The research process itself was profoundly personally challenging. Although I thought I had overcome the prejudices implanted by an oralist education, conducting the study showed me otherwise. I found that my own unrealised prescriptivism prevented me for some time from seeing what was happening before my eyes; the 'Deaf should' syndrome was a veil between me and some aspects of Deaf reality. This is examined more closely in Chapter 8.

Another set of problems concerned cultural over-familiarity, which has only received minimal discussed within ethnography (Spindler and Spindler, 1982). It took a long time to sit back from Deaf social interaction and 'make the familiar strange', and this was only partially achieved. This was also complicated by my particular status in the Deaf community; it was very difficult to go into clubs and groups without conversation and discussions being converted into topics centred around the issues that I was known for.

Thus my status was a two-edged sword; on the one hand it allowed me deep access to respondents who felt they were part of a shared project ('doing it for all Deaf people'), whilst on the other it limited my participant-observation opportunities. It was at times like this that I felt the absence of anthropological or ethnographic guidance. It is also possible that some of the younger respondents were intimidated by my status and would have opened up more deeply to younger Deaf interviewers.

Whilst transcribing the data, I was struck by the number of times the informants questioned me in turn. My initial analysis of this phenomenon was that this indicated the co-operative spirit of the research; I then realised that it also indicated some Deaf

cultural discourse strategies. There was not sufficient time and space to analyse this or organise these responses into categories.

All these issues and several more besides, have implications for subaltern-researcher theory and thus for wider ethnographic and academic theory (see Chapter 8).

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

Chapter 2 summarises how Deaf communities have been perceived, theorised, acted upon and administered by those charged with responsibility for their welfare (henceforth referred to as the 'colonialists'). It then explains how the trope of Deaf culture has emerged as the contemporary conceptual 'battleground' for two contesting sets of discourses, the colonisers and the resurgent colonised. In describing the reasons behind the urgency felt within the Deaf community for establishing the validity of the Deaf cultural concept, the academic factors which hinder such recognition are examined.

The chapter then applies discourse theory to an examination of the British Deaf community to identify the Deaf subaltern. Reflexivity is then applied to my own position as a Deaf researcher to identify the degree to which it is appropriate to situate myself as a Deaf subaltern, and the implications for the remainder of the study.

Chapter 3 examines cultural theory itself ; how the concept has been formulated within and across academic disciplines, and the implications these have for recognising Deaf culture, whilst Chapter 4 examines the development of that term and other related concepts within Deaf Studies itself. However, studying Deaf culture exclusively from the perspectives of the academy would be to maintain the colonialist strategies which have imposed academic epistemologies on Deaf communities. Since it is fundamental that these communities' own epistemological processes and discourses be respected and explored, data previously excluded from academic recognition is incorporated into Chapters 2 and 4.

This being the first study of UK Deaf culture, it is concerned to seek hypotheses with

the capability of maximal generalisability. Thus the data chapters prioritise the identification of a series of dimensions within the culture which can form the basis of those hypotheses. These are gleaned from the two major domains within which Deaf culture has developed - the residential schools (Chapter 5) and the Deaf clubs (Chapter 6).

The two major dimensions manifested in these chapters are historical time and social class. From these emerges a third, a dialectical relationship between the colonialist concept of 'deafness' and Deaf people's own self-concept, which I have termed 'Deafhood'. Chapter 7 describes how this dialectic has continued to manifest itself in more recent and contemporary Deaf cultural life.

Chapter 8 assesses these dimensions against the academic literature relating to culture and community in general and Deaf culture in particular, identifying implications for those criteria. It also assesses the extent to which the study has satisfied critical ethnographic and transparency criteria, and suggests implications for the academy from the subaltern-researcher perspective gained. Finally, it identifies key conceptual and policy implications for both Deaf communities and external agencies.

CHAPTER TWO

DEAF CULTURE?

In order to understand why the concept of Deaf culture is of such critical importance, it is necessary to give a brief overview of the history of Western Deaf communities, with particular reference to the UK. Since this overview spans a lengthy historical period and a wide range of communities, it is extremely dense and of necessity simplified.

This reading is also informed by the discourse theories of Foucault (1972) and Bourdieu (1993), where the maintenance of power and control by ruling groups are perceived as ideologies, and the dialogues within their various domains as discourses. Each contains its own canons of 'truth' which enshrine ideas of relevance, propriety and value, and which delimit the enunciative possibilities of their discourses at any historical moment. By rendering Discourse visible, tools can be developed to deconstruct the colonialist rationalisation of its treatment of Deaf communities, creating political and cultural space for the emergence and ratification of those communities' alternative discourses. The reading below is presented from the Deaf subaltern perspective, and thus represents an alternative history to the hegemonic version.

2.1 TWO PERSPECTIVES AND MODELS OF DEAF COMMUNITIES

It is probable that Deaf people who communicate by gesture or sign have existed as part of humanity from its inception; in the West, the first written evidence of their existence can be found at the dawn of Western literacy itself, with the rise of the Mediterranean societies in the 5th century BC. From that time onwards, Greek philosophers like Herotodus, Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato, and their equivalents in Jewish and Roman society, found the existence of signing Deaf people illuminating when considering wider issues concerning human thought and behaviour, and philosophised about the nature of Deaf people's existence and their place in society, eventually establishing laws relating to them.

Two characteristics of these early discourses are relevant to the study. One is the contrast between those presenting a positive view of Deaf potential, which appears to have been constructed by examining *groups* of Deaf people, and a negative view, which examined only Deaf *individuals* isolated from their peers. The second is the contrast noted by Van Cleve and Crouch (1989) between more positive Judaic / Old Testament discourses about Deaf groups, and negative ones arising from Christianity's view of Deaf individuals as subjects to be healed, initially by Jesus of Nazareth, and later by followers of that religion.

The above form two polar perspectives which have been reproduced ever since, and are schematised here as constituting a 'phobe-phile' axis. The former has considered Deaf people as less than human because of their perceived individual difficulty in communicating with 'normal' people, whilst the other has marvelled at their collective use of sign and gesture, and seen this as enlarging the scope of what it means to be human. These contrasting discourses can be traced through to the present day, assuming different patterns within varying fields and domains. The perception above of Deaf people either as individuals or part of a Deaf collective also forms a crucial underpinning for these discourses.

2.1.1 Deaf 'Emergence' in the Middle Ages

In the 15th century, for reasons not yet explained, there was a considerable increase in both discourses. One strand concerns the education of Deaf people. The earliest surviving accounts focus on private tution for Deaf children of the wealthy in order to satisfy conditions for primogeniture. From that time forward this work produced two types of educational discourses.

The 'phobe' construction (a pathological, or 'medical model') saw Deaf people essentially as empty vessels that could be made to resemble 'normal' humanity in external appearance, by focusing on the development of their speech and discouraging contact with other Deaf people. The 'phile' construction (a 'social model') prioritised

Deaf people's ability to make sense of the world through their own visual skills, their ability to communicate in depth with each other, together with the communicative power found in sign language itself, and perceived them as constituting a community of their own with the potential to administer their own affairs whilst achieving degrees of participation in the majority society. (These descriptions are of necessity simplified.)

Another strand concerns an emerging recorded respect for Deaf people by lay society. One theme concerns achievements by Deaf individuals and groups in artistic and business domains (Miles, 1988; Mirzoeff, 1995), whilst another indicates both the existence of Deaf networks (Bulwer, 1648), and 'hearing' communities which incorporated sign language into their everyday lives (Groce, 1985). A further theme considers the importance and status of visual gesture in some societies during these periods (Mirzoeff, *ibid*) - these may have underpinned a more positive view of Deaf people.

2.1.2 Enlightenment Discourses and the Development of Signed Education

The latter set of perspectives became the dominant discourse when Deaf education was formally established and expanded in Britain and France in the late 18th century. During the Enlightenment era, interest in Deaf people and their languages increased significantly, as philosophers such as Kant, Descartes and Leibniz theorised about them as part of their exploration of what it meant to be human, and how language and thought might have developed (Hodgson, 1953). Lay acceptance can also be noted by the numbers attending exhibitions at Deaf schools and by recognition from numerous Royal courts (Lane, 1984; Jackson, 1990). Art had long been a medium by which Deaf people could 'prove' their humanity to others, and during this period, numbers of known Deaf artists grew exponentially (Mirzoeff, *ibid*).

As Deaf educational establishments began to bring together large numbers of Deaf children and adults, sign languages began to flourish (cf L'Epee, 1984). Subsequently schools were established across Europe and the United States, with Deaf people playing an important part in the work of those schools, a significant number of which they

founded themselves. A high point was the establishment of the world's first public school for Deaf children, deemed 'citizens of the Nation' for the first time, by the French Revolution. Although it can be argued that Deaf people can maintain satisfactory lifestyles whilst existing outside education systems (Desloges, 1984), there is no doubt that the concentration of Deaf children and adults within a residential school system is the single most important factor in maintaining a sizeable and healthy Deaf community. Deaf education therefore was, and continues to be, the battleground on which the community's future existence and quality of life is contested.

By the early 19th century there were sufficient numbers of Deaf graduates from these schools that a demand was created for Deaf meeting places; large numbers of clubs and Nonconformist missions were consequently established across Europe and the United States, many again founded by Deaf people themselves (Lysons, 1963). For the first time, Deaf school graduates were attaining professional positions both within and without the communities, and Deaf magazines and newspapers were developed to facilitate regional and national communication. These developments were enhanced by the establishment in the USA in 1867 of Gallaudet College, the world's first (and only) Deaf university.

Documents from the era show high levels of Deaf self-confidence among those who have left records (Mottez, 1993), including beliefs about the important of possessing a global language, which underpinned their conviction that hearing people could learn from their example. Attempts were also made to formalise the concept of an enfranchised or independent 'Deaf-Mute Nation', both in France (Mottez, *ibid*) and the USA (Van Cleve and Crouch, 1989).

It is important to note that although a Deaf elite existed at this time, their common Deaf experiences in wider society together with the intensity of the bonds formed during school life enabled the elite to know what the general views of the Deaf subaltern were - thus speaking on their behalf did not necessarily imply a distortion of subaltern views. This was to change, as will be seen later.

2.1.3 Colonialist, Social-Darwinist and Scientific Discourses

However, the expansion of Deaf schools and clubs created something of a Trojan horse. Deaf education itself was often constructed to presuppose Hearing masters or paterfamilias with Deaf subjects (e.g. Sicard, 1984) and an ideology of the 'Miracle of Education' was disseminated to lay people, so that Deaf people's entrance into the pantheon of humanity was constructed on what I have termed the *pedagogical conditional*. Deaf leaders, seeking money to establish more schools had little choice but to go along with this ; a similar pattern occurred in the development of Deaf clubs. This conditional being established, Deaf communities were therefore vulnerable when the methodologies of the education system changed.

As the 19th century continued, the growth of industrialisation saw the development of self-justifying colonialist discourses (Said, 1978) which began to equate Deaf people with 'savages' (Darwin, 1871). This period also saw the development of similar self-justifying tropes of 'Science' and 'Progress' which began to construct Deaf people within the regressive trope of 'Nature', as something that could be 'changed for the better'. Social Darwinism applied the 'laws of science' to human societies, and discourses of 'survival of the fittest' were used both to reinforce colonialism and initiate repressive practices with other stigmatised groups (Foucault, 1979). In countries where Catholic-run education systems were strong, L'Epee's social-model doctrine of 'faith via sign language' began to be replaced by the older Pauline medical-model of 'faith via hearing'.

Developments in these domains were reinforced by the concerns of those parents of Deaf children who controlled the purse strings of the school system - the nobility, now augmented by the new mercantile class. Many wished their children to remain within their own social groups, and not to join communities of the Deaf multitudes.

All these themes coalesced in the doctrine of Oralism, which sought to remove sign languages and Deaf teachers from the schools, to replace them by spoken communication only, and thus to forbid Deaf children from signing with each other.

These culminated in the (highly unrepresentative) Milan Conference of 1880. The power embodied in the ruling bodies and their control of the media resulted in rapid dissemination of this message; a useful example is the proclamation by the London Times that 'Deafness is abolished', only days after the conference. Emerging at a time when the centralisation processes of the nation-state were advancing rapidly, the Oralist philosophy was able to swiftly attain hegemonic status, and the dominant discourses thus formed themselves into a single *discursive system*. The growth of Social Darwinist eugenics discourse also resulted in attempts to close Deaf clubs, to prevent Deaf marriages, and laws to sterilise or castrate Deaf people were placed on the statute book of 30 US states (Mirzoeff, 1995) - thus even the adult Deaf community was under attack.

2.1.4 The Deaf Response

Deaf communities and their allies responded by founding national organisations to combat Oralism; the NAD was established in the USA in 1880, and the BDDA in the UK in 1890, both of which still exist today. International congresses were held, culminating in Paris in 1900, where Deaf teachers and headmasters attempted to join the conference intended to ratify Milan. Outnumbering the oralists, they were refused admittance, and spent the week in their own conference next door, attempting to negotiate entry (Lane, 1984). By the end of the week, their battle was lost, and two decades of intense Deaf elite and subaltern activity came to an end. Although the communities never gave up demanding change, their prime focus turned inwards, towards preserving their language and their community and developing their own social structures. Oralism was to remain essentially unchallenged for the next 70 years.

2.1.5 Oralism, Colonialism and Totalitarianism

Once Deaf teachers were removed, Oralism was able to enshrine itself as a colonialist system (Lane, 1993; Wrigley, 1996). To stop Deaf children signing to each other required such great effort that the system inevitably became totalitarian, as summarised in the words of Tarra, a leading oralist of the time:

> Like the true mother of the child placed in judgment before Solomon, speech wishes it all for her own - instruction, school, deaf-mute - without sharing, otherwise she renounces it all. (in Lane, 1984: 393)

As the 20th century progressed, Oralism strengthened its hold over the Deaf education system via a multitude of strategies, including the establishment of a selective grammar school which resulted in the removal of potential Deaf leaders from their peers. Significantly, there were virtually no attempts to systematically study its effects on Deaf children, despite very early warnings from Deaf communities (British Deaf Mute, 1892) and it was not until 1979 in the UK that such a study was published.

The 'Conrad Report' (1979) found that Deaf school-leavers' reading ages were on average eight and a half years, that is to say, functionally illiterate. Even as rated by their own teachers, only 40% were deemed to have intelligible speech, and this figure diminished sharply when measured against those unfamiliar with Deaf voices (in other words, the general public), and their lipreading skills were found to be no better than hearing children who had never been taught to lipread. Similar results began to emerge from all over the world, including other parts of Europe, the United States, and Japan. Such figures went some way towards explaining why Deaf people were excluded throughout the century from higher education, professional training, and many other forms of meaningful participation in society.

During the dominance of this discourse, Deaf people's positive image with the lay public was diminished; earlier perceptions of an organic community with philosophical significance were supplanted by the medical-model perception of a collection of isolated and handicapped individuals who constituted a medical and social problem. In this respect, concern about the dangers of the pedagogical conditional (cf Berthier, 1984) appear to be confirmed. Oralist discourses suggested that lay attitudes towards Deaf people were irrevocably negative, so that they were justified in taking upon themselves the mantle of caring for such social outcasts. Moreover, because of these supposedly negative attitudes, there was no possbility that lay people would be willing to learn sign language - thus communication with them was conceived of as based solely on the

spoken word.

2.1.6 Social Welfare Colonisation

Deemed to be incapable (a self-fulfilling prophecy as the results above indicate), and in fundamental need of charity and welfare support services, the adult Deaf community was rendered vulnerable to another colonialist development. Anglican and Catholic 'Missioners to the Deaf' stepped into the vacuum left by the decline of Nonconformist Deaf lay preachers and the disappearance of the literate Deaf leaders of the 19th century, to develop an absolute hold over Deaf clubs and organisations (Lysons, 1963; NUD, 1992). This was due in part to Deaf dependence upon their sign language skills to act as intermediaries with majority society in all its forms; doctors, hospitals, police, courts, employment finding, funerals, marriages, form filling (i.e. literacy issues) and much else.

Although the BDDA continued to exist, it was also taken over by the Missioners (Grant, 1990) and its role as the voice of the Deaf community was further weakened by the emergence of the National Institute for the Deaf (later RNID). The medical-model of Oralism enabled the construction of a 'deafness' discourse based on a continuum of 'hearing-impairment'. This subsumed Deaf people within a majority consisting of the elderly deafened population together with 'tokenist' Oral graduates of wealthy parentage; thus subaltern linguistic and cultural issues were rendered invisible. With the concomitant growth of new specialisms 'required' to treat Deaf people under this model (and noting the general growth of specialist professional classes during this century), a new discursive system, the *social-control model* emerged. The RNID thus came to serve as an intersecting point for both colonialist discursive systems; as a result they coalesced into a new hugely powerful and all-encompassing 'audist establishment' (Humphries, 1977), which served to keep Deaf and lay people apart.

Despite all the above, there was some evidence that lay people wished to learn sign language (Corfmat, 1990). Deuchar (1984) however, indicates a general reluctance by the missioners to do so; at best limited aspects of the language were taught. This

enabled the missioners to retain their power as the gatekeepers of Deaf society.

2.1.7 Deaf Community Resurgence

In the mid 1970s, growing awareness of the failure of Oralism, combined with the de-colonization processes engendered by the liberal 1960s, enabled the beginnings of a Deaf resurgence. Eight stages in this process can be identified in the UK; similar patterns can be found in most Western Deaf communities.

(i) Development of the Welfare State

The Seebohm Report (1968) marked the intervention of the Welfare state into Deaf affairs, facilitating the introduction of social services departments. These resulted in a slackening of the missioner system's hold over Deaf community life at both social and political levels.

(ii) A Deaf Subaltern Movement

The first all-Deaf-run pressure group seen in the UK, the National Union of the Deaf (NUD), was formed in 1976. Unlike the BDA, then run by a combination of hearing missioners and Deaf elite, the NUD was fundamentally a subaltern movement informed by activists familar with 'post-colonial' and Black consciousness developments from the 1960s. Its successes not only brought into question the appropriateness of hearing people's control of Deaf affairs, but questioned the suitability of Deaf leaders who were content to operate under such systems (NUD, 1977).

(iii) The 'Total Communication' Movement

Influenced by a growing movement in the United States, the BDA and the NUD mobilised a 'Total Communication' movement to restore limited forms of BSL to Deaf education. This achieved partial change in respect of the role of sign language, but was unsuccessful (in the UK) in producing significant numbers of new Deaf teachers.

(iv) Deaf Visibility and the Media

As a result of NUD and BDA pressure, regular television programmes in sign language

were established in 1982. Not only did this give a significant boost to Deaf confidence and pride, but it brought long overdue visibility and prestige to that community in the eyes of the public, the hard of hearing and deafened population, and the disability movement (Crean, 1997). In so doing, it gave impetus to a focus on Deaf issues themselves, and encouraged a sense of their importance. Together with (v) below, this resulted in a tremendous upsurge of lay people wishing to learn BSL, and created a concomitant demand for Deaf professionals to teach the language.

(v) Linguistic Recognition

Recognition by linguists in the USA, the UK and elsewhere, that sign languages were bona- fide languages with their own unique grammatical structures (Stokoe *et al*, 1965), had a dual effect; firstly on the Deaf community itself, where covert pride in their language was finally vindicated, and secondly on lay people, who could now perceive Deaf people as worthy of respect rather than as medical problems. Such linguistic recognition also enabled Deaf people and their allies to develop a political construction of Deaf communities as linguistic minorities, which underpinned a battle for governmental recognition of Deaf people's new status.

Linguistic recognition also resulted in a new Deaf educational movement for bi-lingual, bi-cultural education. Althought this has increased the numbers of Deaf people working as aides in schools, it has essentially been superimposed on the colonialist structure, which remains in effect in a more 'liberal' form.

(vi) Deaf Professionals and the Interpreting Profession

Linguistic recognition led directly to a sixth stage: over 200 Deaf people achieved qualifications to teach BSL through the British Sign Language Training Agency (BSLTA), a joint creation of the BDA and Durham University, creating the largest single group of Deaf professionals to date. This agency was also involved with others in facilitating the development of a new profession, sign language interpreters, enabling Deaf people to move further away from welfare agencies' control systems. Similarly, the increased numbers of such interpreters made it possible for numbers of Deaf people to break the 'glass ceiling' which had kept them from other professional employment on

the grounds that communication was essential to such work.

Of crucial significance for this study, the latter three developments each primarily validated and empowered the subaltern Deaf who used BSL, at the expense of the existing elite who favoured 'Signed English' (see 2.2) - thus setting the scene for intense internal tensions as one discourse waxed whilst another waned.

(vii) The Rediscovery of Deaf History

This renewed recognition that Deaf people and their communities had a valid history of their own, was sparked off by the publication of a historical account of French and American Deaf people ('When The Mind Hears', Lane, 1984), which graphically described both the rise of those communities, and the sheer scale of the attack on them. Linkage was established between the rise of Oralism and the destruction of Deaf history, paving the way for its reclamation, as well as validating the case for a return to more successful models of Deaf education buried within that history.

Another important issue is the continuing emergence of data which suggests that lay people had *not* always been negatively disposed towards Deaf people. This may be confirmed by the numbers now learning BSL - that it may be the case that such positive desires were always there (as Deaf subalterns had often asserted), but there had been no way of circumventing the gatekeepers until BSL appeared on television.

(viii) Deaf Studies Courses and Academic Recognition

These seven stages culminated in the development of Deaf Studies departments within British universities. Pioneered by Bristol University, these departments offered Deaf people access for the first time to a range of information about their past and present, and the opportunity to reflect on and research in, their community. These courses thus constitute the final rung in the ladder bringing Deafhood discourses within reach of academic study.

Throughout the resurgence there was a growing assertion that a 'Deaf Way' of life existed, and a new term emerged to encapsulate this - 'Deaf Culture'.

2.1.8 The Oralist Response

As with other minority gains during the last twenty years, this Deaf resurgence was threatened by a backlash which took three main forms.

Oralists found assistance from an unlikely source - the liberal wing of the educational system, which wished to promote the mainstreaming of disabled, and therefore (from the medical perspective), Deaf children. Thus, as fast as the Deaf schools were converted to signing establishments, they were closed down because of falling rolls. As of the present time, 94.7% of all 'hearing-impaired' children are now isolated within the hearing school system. Deaf opposition to such practices has been constructed as 'segregationist' by their opponents, and attempts to explain their position has therefore met with considerable resistance (Branson and Miller, 1993).

During the 1980s, cochlear implants (CI), a form of surgery which implanted electro-magnetic devices inside the cranium was developed, initially to give some sense of sound to adults who had adventitiously lost all their hearing. However, long before these experiments had provided conclusive evidence of success, oralists seized their opportunity to assert the benefits of these devices for young Deaf children (Lane, 1993). Utilising their contacts in the scientific establishment and the media, a public climate was manufactured which proclaimed the advent of the 'miracle cure' and suggesting once more that 'deafness is abolished'.

In the 1990s, genetic engineering has initiated the process of trying to identify 'the deaf gene', bringing within theoretical reach what might be termed the 'final solution' - that of eradicating Deaf people altogether. This of course has reinforced the impetus created by the CI movement above.

These developments have threatened to turn lay people's attention away from the recent move towards accepting Deaf people and communities, and back towards ideas of 'curing' them. Given the continuing existence of colonialism in its more 'liberal' forms, circumventing the gatekeepers to reach 'positive' lay people remains a priority, and

debate via the various media an important domain in which to do so. However, given the power imbalance within these media, Deaf (and hearing) opposition to the developments above has been negatively framed and constructed, so that few platforms exist from which dialogue can be mounted.

2.1.9 Deaf Culture as Contemporary Site of Resistance

In attempting to develop a conceptual base from which to resist this backlash, Deaf people and their allies have begun to site themselves around the trope of Deaf culture which asserts that it is fine to be Deaf, and that there are valid 'Deaf-centred' ways of perceiving and being in the world which offers benefits for the wider society, and which should be heeded in all matters affecting Deaf adults and children (Solomon, 1994). Those under the sway of the medical-model find this hard to credit, identifying the Deaf culture trope as the centre of these unpalatable views, and thus attack or doubt (Figure 1) the very concept which represents the site of contemporary Deaf resistance. This is perhaps unsurprising given the implications of recognising Deaf culture - once Deaf-centred concepts are accepted, the whole basis for colonialism is overthrown.

For the first time this century, therefore, there are two discursive systems, each with their own power bases (albeit grossly unequal ones), competing for dominance. The central trope of this struggle has become the term 'Deaf culture' itself. Given the speed at which the three 'neo-oralist' developments are being implemented, establishing the validity of Deaf culture has therefore taken on an increased sense of urgency.

Because of the power and prestige of academic constructions of Knowledge, recognising Deaf culture and Deaf subaltern views within those domains is an essential first step in building the platforms mentioned above to reach lay people and win support for overturning the colonialism of Deaf people in all its forms.

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2.2 DIFFICULTIES IN VALIDATING DEAF CULTURE

There are however a number of issues which render cultural recognition problematic.

2.2.1 Ethnocentrism and Hearing Impairment

Even amongst the most racist of people, there is now an acceptance that non-white people have their own languages and cultures - the issue in these domains now turns on questions of linguistic and cultural superiority. Yet significant numbers of people find it hard to believe that Deaf communities could have cultures of their own.

There appear to be three main reasons for this. One is the internalisation of the medical model. Another is ethnocentrism - that for hearing people to try to introspect what being Deaf is like, the first simple step is to envisage themselves without hearing. This of course is a medical construction, but it is one that renders the idea of deafness as an impaired physical faculty a difficult image to revise (Lane, 1993b). The third relates to the difficulty in comprehending that children so 'obviously' born and bred as the product of one's own country and indeed, one's own womb, can really be so fundamentally different from their apparent compatriots.

2.2.2 Misunderstandings of the Concept of Culture

Unless human beings have studied or intimately experienced cultures in the plural, they struggle to conceive of the world being interpreted in any way other than the forms in which they themselves were raised, a perception which nation-states have encouraged. The very essence of culture is that to its practitioners it is simply 'natural', constituted of a thousand everyday acts and thoughts so intimately assimilated as to be almost impossible to perceive. Thus to be faced with the idea of a separate Deaf culture in one's own land forces people to confront the whole concept of culture, which has itself only emerged as the subject of deliberation in the last thirty years.

2.2.3 Cross-categorisation of Deaf Communities

The unique status of Deaf communities is itself a problem. No matter which way one tries to categorise Deaf people, there is no clean fit. To define them simply as disabled is to overlook the linguistic foundation of their collective life. To define them as a linguistic group is to overlook the very real sensory characteristics of their existence, both positive (a unique visual apprehension of the world out of which sign languages have been constructed), and negative (communication barriers are not simply linguistic, but sonic also).

2.2.4 Ethnicity, Identity and Cultural Choice

Conventional definitions of cultures also appear to thwart easy recognition of Deaf culture. The characteristic of ethnicity is rendered problematic because only 5-6% of Deaf children at most are born to two Deaf parents (Kyle and Woll, 1985), posing questions in relation to conventional ideas of cultural transmission. Traditional theories also emphasise that cultural development is 'involuntary' ; since individuals are socialised into their community from birth, questions are raised concerning the cultural validity of 'choosing' to be 'Deaf'.

2.2.5 Cultural Geography and Ontolology

Additionally, Deaf communities do not have their own land, nor live (or even choose to live), as geographically intimate communities. There are also very few material productions that are 'Deaf', compared to those of many other cultures. Finally, doubt has been expressed as to whether Deaf cultures have ontological systems which most other cultures possess.

2.2.6 Circularity of Definition

The hegemonic construction of a continuum of hearing-impairment has resulted in the absence of clear-cut boundaries around the Deaf community. Attempts to define Deaf

communities and Deaf culture therefore become circular - 'Deaf communities are those which have Deaf culture / Deaf culture is a defining characteristic of Deaf communities' (Turner, 1994a). To date, no-one has succeeded in transcending that circularity.

2.2.7 Deaf Communities and Sub-cultures

Although several of these difficulties can be removed by defining Deaf culture as a subculture, contemporary definitions of sub-cultures do not fit the reality of Deaf existence.

2.2.8 The Proliferation of the 'Deaf Culture' Trope

However, none of these definitional problems has stopped Deaf people and many who work with them from rapidly disseminating the term over the last decade. There is clearly an underlying and unexamined need to denote some important aspects of Deaf existence in this way. But the more the term is used unthinkingly, the more confused the situation becomes; thus the longer those who ignore or oppose Deaf people's views can continue to do so. As of the present time, there are very few academic works which focus on Deaf culture, hence the urgent need for studies which attempt to unpick the complex, interwoven threads that not only bind Deaf life, but which also link it with the lives of majority societies.

2.3 IDENTIFYING THE DEAF SUBALTERN

Having clarified the reasons for focusing on Deaf culture, it is now necessary to do the same for the contemporary Deaf subaltern.

2.3.1 Pre-Oralism

Historical evidence suggests that prior to the disappearance of Deaf professionals a two-tier distinction between professionals and subalterns existed, although 2.1.2 emphasised that important core beliefs were held by both groups.

2.3.2 Post-Oralism

After Oralism, however, the only Deaf people who were *not* subaltern were the handful of Deaf missionaries and welfare workers, together with any oralist children of the wealthy, who, where they acknowledged each other at all, formed their own small social groupings. As explained in 2.1.5, the new 'deafness' trope constructed all forms of hearing impairment as a continuum, so that those named above were drawn into a hegemonic discourse and thence to denigrate the discourses of the Deaf subalterns. Figure 2 below situates the two discourses and their participants :

		PARTICIPANTS IN	
		DEAFNESS1 DISCOURSE	**SUBALTERN DEAF DISCOURSE**
POLITICIANS	)		DEAF SUBALTERNS
MEDIA	)		
ACADEMICS	)	(the Discursive System)	
SCIENTISTS	)		
MEDICAL PROFESSION	)		
SOCIAL WELFARE PROFESSIONS	)		SOME MISSIONERS
HEARING-IMPAIRED ELITE	)		
DEAF PROFESSIONALS	)		DEAF PROFESSIONALS

The two groups omitted from these discourses are lay people and hearing-impaired subalterns. The vast majority of the latter were retired people with a comparatively small degree of hearing loss who have remained relatively uninvolved in deafness discourses (Alker, 1998).

This hegemony inevitably rendered subaltern Deaf discourses invisible. Even today, there exists no other term by which to distinguish the 'state of being hearing-impaired' from the state of being 'Deaf', other than the recently capitalised noun. Bienvenu (1991) follows Rancke (1988) in critiquing this, whilst Bahan (1997) illustrates some of the additional contemporary problems that this causes. Clearly the first step towards creating a theoretical space for the Deaf subaltern to speak requires that the territory be named. It is for this reason that I developed the term 'Deafhood', which follows the

linguistic principles of encapsulating the *ding an sich* found in such other domains as 'childhood', 'womanhood', and so on. I am aware of criticisms of essentialism which might be directed at such a term, (e.g. Gilroy, 1993b) in other fields, but concur with Spivak's (1990) observations of the need for 'strategic essentialism', especially in a preliminary study such as this.

2.3.3 Fundamental Distinctions between Deaf Professionals and Subalterns

Sociolinguistic studies of British Deaf communities have found that within Deafhood discourse the fundamental distinctions are not degree of hearing loss, nor (necessarily) educational achievement or employment status, as would be found in mainstream society (Kyle and Woll, 1985).

However there is an important unacknowledged distinction which can be made between those who have command of the language of the majority society (whether by being able to partially hear it, speak it, read or write it), and those who do not. Oralism has reinforced this division in that those with a smaller degree of hearing loss hâve a better chance of attaining English under Oralism (Conrad, 1979). Command of English means that the few d/Deaf elite are able to participate in the deafness discourse as well as other written manifestations of majority society discourse, whereas the others are not. This is identified by the Deaf subaltern-researcher Philip (1987), who asserts that the Deaf subaltern is essentially monolingual, and that policies in relation to Deaf communities should be centred around awareness of this.

This position is unusual; most sociolinguistic models assert a simple demarcation based 'first / native language', and whether that is BSL or English. Although a laudable attempt to accentuate the positive in Deaf life, it is not geared towards a recognition and deconstruction of where power is situated within both deafness and Deafhood domains. Some might feel that moving the demarcation line to apparent 'competence' in the majority language establishes a negative image; but if one has sufficient respect for and confidence in, the myriad forms of subaltern Deaf language and culture, then the overall position remains positive. The monolingualism demarcation also clarifies which

discourses are participated in by which Deaf people, and thus liberates academic space for recognition of Deaf subaltern discourses as well as indicating the boundaries within which they find themselves fenced.

2.3.4 The Deaf Resurgence and Changes in the Model

Following the Deaf resurgence, however, the picture becomes more complex. The doors forced open in the last decade have seen several hundred Deaf subalterns obtain professional and semi-professional posts and training and thus begin to participate in the deafness discourses. This may problematicise the concept of Deaf subaltern. Do these people constitute a new category, and has this really affected the basic dynamics of the hegemonic discourses?

Within recent Deaf discourses there has been much debate along these lines, as evidenced by the emergence of the two BSL signs below :

Fig.3

The essential difference between the two signs is the reversal of the directional movement of the right hand.

These signs are about ten years old. 'GRASS-ROOTS' adapted the English phrase into an iconic form, and was not widely popular for that reason. Nevertheless it was accepted to the extent that a pun was developed which reversed the movement to indicate those who had 'uprooted' themselves from the subaltern community.

Although the community has begun to make such a distinction, there are reasons to believe that the uprooted group are still essentially subalterns :

(i) Both groups still share BSL as their first language and the culture developed from it.

(ii) Both still share common cultural backgrounds based around the Deaf school experience.

(iii) Both experienced oralism and internalised its effect on self-worth and so on.

(iv) Both share a knowledge of Deaf social organisation and of Deaf history and tradition.

(v) Although the English skills of the 'uprooted' have improved, they are still not comfortable with printed and spoken English discourses, as evidenced by the continuing absence of written papers. In effect very few have moved across to participate in the deafness discourse, though *some have internalised it as part of their training*.

(vi) Most 'uprooted' still socialise within the Deaf community, albeit in different forms than before (Sign On, 1998).

(vii) All are committed to maintaining and developing the Deaf community (Baker, and Cokely 1980), even if they have different roles or strategies for doing so.

(viii) Both sectors have embraced the 'D' concept (Redfern, 1995) and are still perceived and treated as 'Deaf' by the hegemonic discourses (except where the latter find it politically expedient not to do so).

(i) to (vii) support the continuing applicability of the term subaltern, whilst only (v) and

(vi) have resulted in some dissension and confusion within the community. Therefore this study will continue to use the term. However, some demarcation is necessary, so the new Deaf professionals will be referred to as the *'subaltern-elite'*.

These are simplified schemata; the recent development of mainstreaming, for example, has produced young Deaf people who are not easily placed within the subaltern strata, and there are also problematics around the siting of recently emerged Afro-Caribbean and Asian young Deaf people, and young Gay and lesbian Deaf, among others.

2.3.5 Refining the Bi-Polar Framework

One of the most significant developments of the Deaf resurgence is the emergence of a Deafhood discourse. The teaching of subaltern Deaf people about their language and culture increased their Deaf pride and awareness (Denmark, 1991), whilst the prioritisation of many professional posts for BSL users and Deaf families, including within the prestigious Deaf TV domain, generated new respect for them from both the subaltern Deaf and the hearing newcomers. These developments require an amendment of the bi-polar framework (figure 4) :

DEAFNESS DISCOURSE	**DEAFHOOD DISCOURSES**	
	SUBALTERN ELITE	**TRADITIONAL**
Discursive System Members (Some Subaltern Deaf Elite)		
	Subaltern Deaf Elite	Subaltern Deaf Elite Trad. Subaltern
New / Young Professionals	Self-selected Lay People New / Young Professionals	

This newly emerged 'intermediate' discourse has also created a space for lay people, chiefly those who have started to learn BSL or Deaf Studies, to finally enter the Deaf world. Likewise it offers space to the other new professions such as interpreters and sign linguists, as well as new and more enlightened entrants to the traditional professions of teaching and welfare work. It is this space that Bienvenu and Colonomos (1989) have labelled 'the third culture'. Spaces for Deaf minorities are still not easily identified, but can be said to vary between participation in the Deafhood discourses and the creation of private discourses of their own, one manifestation of which is GSV (Gay Sign Variation).

The model above offers as contemporary a framework as can be constructed, and will be used for the remainder of this study.

2.4 SITUATING MYSELF AS DEAF SUBALTERN-RESEARCHER

The study so far has been predicated on my experiences and observations as a Deaf researcher. In order to continue the transparency process it is now necessary to situate myself in relation to the discourses above.

Being orally mainstreamed, I am situated outside (i) and (ii) experientially. However, my own experience of Oralism (iii) brings me close to that discourse (Sign On, 1998), which is reinforced by my community participation and experiences of the last 25 years (iv).

My first language being English (v) provides a telling obstacle to overcome - understanding the degree of helplessness felt by subalterns has not been easy, and there is a real sense iin which I stand outside this space, not least because of my ability to speak (English).

My socialisation patterns (vi) are more akin to those of the subaltern-elite, whilst my commitment to the community (vii) is a key factor; this quality can only be measured

and acceptance granted over time (Baker and Cokely, 1980). That having occurred and commitment proved to the extent that deafness discourses not only identify me with the group, but see me as an opponent (viii), I am ultimately placed in a position most akin to a subaltern-elite advocate of subaltern values.

The identifying characteristics above ultimately enabled me to gain access to the Deaf community, and these are described in greater depth in Chapter 4. However, in order to maintain transparency, I will draw attention to situations when my inability to experience (i), (ii) and (v) affect the study.

2.5 LIMITATIONS OF PRESENT STUDIES OF CULTURE

Traditional academic studies have been predicated on a two-tier assumption; an active academic subject examining a passive object. This hegemony does not admit of a space within which subaltern-researchers working within social sciences can insert themselves and their experiential knowledge into the matrix (hooks, 1989), and also influences other more recent disciplines such as Cultural Studies.

Additionally, 'culture' itself is one of the most complex academic concepts to unpick (Williams, 1976). Most attempts to do so have come from within anthropology which is predicated on studies of remote individual societies; the complexities of an entire nation-state and the rapid changes of the post-industrial era render it almost impossible to isolate and explicate their cultures.

To this must be added the relative newness of cultural research, so that disciplines such as Post-Colonial and Minority Studies, whilst offering useful parallels for Deaf Studies, are too recently formed for in-depth cross-comparisons to be made, and placed in too defensive a position to render their discourses explicit for the outsider (Gilroy, 1993a).

Nevertheless, there is much that can be gained from examining cultural research and theory, as the review of that literature will now show.

CHAPTER THREE

CULTURE - DEFINITIONS AND THEORIES

This chapter reviews academic discourses on culture to identify theories which may assist with the construction of the research questions.

3.1 DEAF COLLECTIVE LIFE AND CULTURAL DEFINITIONS

2.2 identified eight problematics for the concept of Deaf culture. However, we must acknowledge that some of these questions can be reversed; are these problems created by *the inadequacy of definitions of culture themselves ?* A parallel situation existed within linguistic theory; prior to the validation of sign languages, definitions of 'language' itself contained several criteria which appeared to exclude non-spoken languages from recognition (Deuchar, 1984). We now know that this was founded upon definitional inadequacies. With this precedent in mind, we can now proceed to examine cultural theories.

3.2 TRADITIONAL THEORIES OF CULTURE

1. Wider Definitional Problems

It is important at the outset to emphasise the magnitude of the task. Keesing (1974), one of the anthropologists most concerned with cultural theory has concluded:

> The possibility of analysing a cultural system in any complete sense ... remains far on the horizon - and may forever remain so. (p.92)

Likewise, Williams (1976: 76) summarises:

> Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. This is so partly because of its intricate historical development in several European languages, but mainly because it has come to be

used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines, and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought.

Such definitional problems are not unique to cultural study, but obtain within other social sciences; consensus even about the meaning of terms such as 'language' and 'sociology' has not yet occurred (Boudon, 1980). It is possible to conclude that these problems are intrinsic to the nature of social science, and that imposition of standards derived from 'hard science' is fundamentally misleading. Certainly, the fact that Kroeber and Kluckhohn identified a minimum of 164 definitions of culture as long ago as 1952, makes the task of assessing 'culture' a daunting one.

2. Initial Categorisation

It is possible to make a beginning with Kroeber and Kluckhohn's creation of 6 categories (with sub-categories) 'on the basis of principal emphasis' (p.77).

Category A: Broad definitions with an emphasis on taxonomical accounts of cultural features.

Category B: Definitions which emphasise historical, traditional, or social heritage features.

Category C: Emphasises 'normative' features, that is 'rules' or 'ways'. One sub-category is marked as 'ideals or values', where behaviour is assessed in relation to them.

Category D: Centres on psychological features, including 'adjustment ... culture as a problem-solving device'. Other emphases centre upon learning and habit.

Category E: 'Structural', emphasising 'the patterning or organisation of culture'.

Category F: 'Genetic'; takes three primary forms - an 'emphasis on culture as a product or artefact', an emphasis on 'ideas', and on 'symbols'.

We can see that cultural analyses have been centred upon the author's own orientation or priorities, and because these vary so widely, attempts to locate a consensus are marked by discussions often at cross-puposes with each other. For further enlightenment

therefore, it is necessary to examine some of the traditional sites of cultural study to see what bearing they have on the present research.

3.3 ANTHROPOLOGICAL TRADITIONS

1. Culture as Totality

Anthropology provided the first definitions of culture; Tylor (1871) considering culture as:

> That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any capabilities and habits acquired by man [*sic*] as a member of society. (p.1)

The many subsequent definitions differ chiefly in their emphasis on one or other aspect of his taxonomy. All appear to agree that it is an essential part of any conception of culture that it embrace that whole. Mair (1965: 6) uses this idea to distinguish anthropology from sociology:

> We consider it our business to observe the *totality* of relationships operating between the people in a social unit that we study, not only those directly relevant to a particular problem.

Even when anthropologists have studied 'a particular problem', the terms of reference are almost always framed within those same 'totality of relationships'.

This is because the human species is the only one which encompasses such tremendous diversity in behaviour, lifestyles, beliefs and communication systems (Spradley, 1979). When studying the underlying factors behind such diversity, one comes to the conclusion that this is most efficiently explained by humans' unique ability to *create* ways of life, cultures, for themselves. To be human, then, is to create culture. Thus, anthropology's aim is in the first instance to study each collective totality of human creativity, towards an ultimate goal that can be summarised as 'to describe and explain the regularities and variations in [human] social behaviour' (p.10). As such, then,

'cultural description ... is the first step in understanding the human species' (*ibid*).

2. The Relationship between 'Culture' and 'Society'

Within the English-speaking discipline, two traditions developed. 'Social Anthropology' was essentially British, and focused on the organization and integration of societies in what has been called the 'functionalist tradition'. In this tradition the concept of culture was subsumed within terminology like 'social structure' and 'society'. An example of such a definition is Fortes' (1953):

> Social structure is not an aspect of culture but the entire culture of a given people handled in a special frame of theory. (in Geertz, 1973: 144)

The second, 'Cultural Anthropology', is primarily American. In this tradition, the relationship between culture and society is inverted. Culture constituted all the learned and socially transmitted ways of a people, subsuming their modes of social organisation into models of value systems and belief systems. An example of this type of definition is Kroeber and Kluckhohn's:

> Patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts. (in Keesing, 1981: 68)

As a result, as Keesing (1981) puts it, that 'Until the late 1950s, there was a tendency for scholars working in these traditions with different theoretical perspectives to talk past one another' (p.349).

Since that time there has been a growing rapprochment between these two traditions, as summarised by Geertz (1973), in Keesing's words:

> The integration of a social system is 'structural-functional' - the fitting together of institutions and modes of defining social relationships; the integration of a cultural system is 'logico-aesthetic' - the coherence and logic of a system of symbols. (1981: 349)

Such a perspective enables us to hold concepts of culture and of society within the single gaze. Nevertheless, one major difficulty in taking such an all-embracing position is that, as Keesing (1974: 73) notes, such positions are so all-inclusive that they are in danger of saying nothing at all. Importantly for a study of Deaf culture, they do not easily accomodate the phenomenon of cultural change, or the important relationship between the individual cultural agent and his/her culture / society. In order to frame such questions, other possibilities must be explored.

3. Cultures as Adaptative Systems

One possibility is the perception of cultures as adaptive systems, 'which serve to relate human communities to their ecological setting' (Keesing 1974: 74). Proponents of these theories, perceive 'economies and their social correlates as in some sense primary' (*ibid*: 75). An example of such a definition is Meggers (1971):

> Man is an animal and, like all other animals, must maintain an adaptive relationship with his surroundings in order to survive ... he achieves this adaptation principally through the medium of culture. (p.4)

Adaptational theories are useful when considering how Deaf culture might be reactive to the majority culture and its actions. Likewise, if one considers that the Deaf environment is the 'hearing' world by which they are surrounded, adaptational strategies may form an important part of individual and collective Deaf life. However they do not address how such strategies might be measured, thus requiring us to examine the potential of ideational theories, below.

4. Cultures as Ideational Constructs

Keesing identifies several types of 'ideational theories of culture'. One perceives cultures as cognitive systems, typified by this definition from Goodenough (1957):

> A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture is

> not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behaviour, or emotions. It is rather an organization of those things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them. (p.167)

Unfortunately, theories of this kind have 'not progressed very far beyond a mapping of limited and neatly bounded semantic domains' (Keesing, p.78). A related approach treats cultures as systems of shared symbols and meanings, existing not in people's minds per se, but between them, being shared by social actors, and thus public, not private. This places the emphasis not on deciphering a cultural system, but interpreting it. Geertz (1973: 44) suggests that:

> Culture is best seen as ... a set of control mechanisms - plans, recipes, rules, instructions ... for the governing of behaviour.

Ideational models would appear to be of use for Deaf culture, where there is less frequent social interaction (and thus proportionately more time spent existing in a 'mentalist' mode), and fewer material constructions; however, as traditionally expressed, these leave little space for cultural variation between individuals, or changes over time.

5. Cultural Competence and Performance

One suggestion for incorporating individual cultural strategies is to posit an idealized individual actor (Goodenough, ibid), much as Chomsky has done in linguistics. However, life in contemporary Western society is too complex for such a representative individual to be selected; it is much easier, though still limiting, to use this concept in the linguistic domain, where rules of grammar and language learning can at least be posited as finite.

Keesing (*ibid*: 89) attempts to resolve the dilemma by utilising the linguistic terms of 'competence' and 'performance' to draw the two sets of theories together:

> Culture, conceived as a system of competence ... is then not all of what

> an individual knows, thinks and feels about his [*sic*] world. It is his theory of what his fellows know, believe and mean; his theory of the code being followed, the game being played, in the society into which he was born.

To paraphrase Keesing, this construction above proposes culture, not only as a matrix of symbols, but as a 'system of knowledge' which allows for each (Deaf) individual *not* to know about all sectors of their culture, but to perform from their theories of what they perceive. The rules of the game can in turn be altered or changed by their actions; thus this dialectic might provide a mechanism by which to understand (Deaf) cultural change.

6. Culture, Power Relations and Authenticity

Keesing's proposal is useful, but assumes a 'level playing field' in which each aspect of a culture carries equal social and political weight, equal 'authenticity'. This is a weakness within traditional anthropology as Asad summarises:

> [the] basic social object which is presented in the discourse of such anthropologists, whether rationalists or empiricists, [has been] constructed out of an *a priori* system of essential human meanings - an 'authentic culture'. (1979: 609)

Traditional emphases on authenticity mask power relationships between the investigating majority cultures and the 'objectified' minority cultures, and has been challenged; as Street (1993: 27) comments:

> The reification and naturalisation of 'culture' hides the kind of questions about power and social change that are currently at the forefront of anthropological enquiry.

Once traditional anthropological ahistoricism is questioned, as Thornton (1988: 26) puts it:

> An understanding of culture, then, [becomes] not simply a knowledge of differences, but rather an understanding of how and why differences ... have come about.

Such discussions are important for Deaf culture because they offer a means of re-interpreting the dynamics of minority or oppressed cultures in general. However within anthropology these are in their infancy; we must look elsewhere, to Cultural Studies in 3.4, for assistance. Cowan (1990) gives one example from this discipline which might be of use - Gramsci's concept of hegemony. As she puts it:

> The analytic usefulness of the concept of hegemony is that rather than presupposing a moral consensus, it makes it problematical. The concept thus opens up the question of how members of different social groups - variously positioned - accept, manipulate, use or contest hegemonic (that is dominant) ideas. (p.12)

This concept is examined more closely in 3.4.3. A further usefulness of hegemony is that it opens up an issue which anthropology traditionally elides, namely the idea that all cultures are equally 'good' and healthy systems. Although the idea of cultural relativity, like linguistic relativity, was a noble one, intended to counterbalance colonialist ideas of 'superior' cultures, it has hindered our understanding of cultural processes. Once we admit that cultures are shaped by hegemonic principles it is possible to admit not only that majority cultures may be ruled by groups whose interests are inimical to the health of the culture as a whole, (so that these cultures may be conceived of as 'damaged' in some way; cf Marcuse, 1968), but that oppressed (Deaf) cultures may be also be damaged by this process, and that it is quite permissable to admit that. Furthermore, there may actually be a correlation between the two 'damaged cultures', as Churchill (1994), examining Native American cultures, and feminists (Daly, 1979) have illustrated.

7. Power Relations and Cultural Change

Debates emerging from the concerns above are still new. How might the mechanics of such processes be theorised ? Bohannen (1995) reaches into Cultural Studies to adapt Hall (1966); all life events can be conceived of as 'action chains'. He proposes patterns of cultural trajectories and cycles, and developes a theory of 'recontexting', where 'meanings are transferred from one range within a particular cultural tradition to another

within the same cultural tradition' (p.69). This, if extended to theorise across cultures, forms the basis for a dynamic theory of Deaf culture where adaptation of ('Hearing') meanings can be found to operate within Deaf life.

Bohannen also posits concepts of cultural 'equilibrium' and 'turbulence' where ideas about cultural evolution can be grounded, characterised by cultural 'cusps' and 'new cultural paradigms' (p.115). Once cultural change can be dissected, it then becomes possible to identify other features, such as 'cultural lock-ins' (p.173), and 'cultural traps', defined thus:

> A [cultural] virtue turns into a cultural trap if people slavishly follow some specific formulation of it... As conditions change, any religious explanations or political convictions that stifle thought and preclude questioning become deadly. When that happens, the very culture that had helped its people solve whatever problems they in fact solved, can become a trap that destroys everything their ancestors worked for. (p.125)

The strength of Bohannen's work lies in his application of his ideas to both Western and tribal societies. In dealing with the meeting of two cultures, or of rapid changes within a single culture, he develops concepts of 'cultural dissonance' (p.135) which are also applied to both cultures.

All of this is of particular relevance to the situation in which Deaf cultures have found themselves. Re-contexting describes one mechanism by which Deaf and other minority individuals and groups adapt forms in order to sustain their own distinct identities and values, as Levine (1977) brilliantly illustrates for African-American culture. Cultural traps are also particularly apposite for an analysis of post-colonial, post-indepedence cultures such as the present-day Deaf community, as Fanon's analysis of Algeria (1968, 1986) shows. Likewise, cultural dissonance is useful for analysing rapid change within Deaf and other cultures, as well as partially accounting for the dissonance caused by the conflict of social-medical and linguistic-cultural models in and around Deaf life.

However, there is still a need both to formulate the role of the individual agent, the role of different 'fields' within a culture, and the imbalances of power within those fields.

These issues are addressed in 3.5.8.

8. Cultural Change and Futurology

Once cultural analysis embraces historical change, a further dimension is opened up. Post-colonial studies have begun to raise the question of how to reclaim / rebuild their cultures, whilst Bohannen includes the future as an essential feature, not just of cultural process, but of cultures at any given time. Indeed, as he asserts:

> As long as ethnographers fail to look at the ideas people hold about the future, they are not doing their jobs adequately. (p.192)

He then proceeds to delineate types of 'futurography'. Although this theory is very new, it has striking relevance for minority cultures. It appears to be a characteristic of majority cultures that conceiving of, thinking about, or planning for their cultural future has a very low priority. On the other hand, dissident cultural groups, oppressed in the present may give high priority to imagining and realising alternative futures (Roszak, 1971).

This prioritising of strategies resonates even more strongly within minority cultures, for the future not only of their culture, but their entire community may be threatened, as is currently manifested in medical-model attacks on the Deaf community (genetics and cochlea implants), and in the 'education' based assimilation of aboriginal and other 'First Nation' cultures (Churchill, 1984). Alternative conceptions of the future are thus a necessity rather than a luxury.

Thus two major axis exist in the futurology of minority cultures - the (external) oppression which threatens their ability to conceive of a future, and the (internal) alternative vision of a cultural future which they must put forward in order to *even maintain an existential equilibrium*.

As Chapter 2 showed, each stage of Deaf advancement has been met by a wave of reaction. The global spread of Deaf-oriented schools and communities was halted by

oralism. The sign language resurgence a century later was countered by mainstreaming and the closing of those schools. And now the general Deaf resurgence and public prominence has been challenged by cochlea implants and genetics. It is impossible therefore to develop a satisfactory analysis of Deaf culture without incorporating the very real effect on a community where each attempt to achieve equilibrium has been defeated, and where fear of the future is an important dynamic.

9. Summary

Anthropology, although an appropriate site for the investigation of Deaf culture, has only recently developed non-traditional theories which might be useful for this study. Rather than adopt a single model from this discipline, I will draw on theories from this section where appropriate.

3.4 CULTURAL STUDIES

1. Origins of the Discipline

Cultural Studies is a comparatively youthful discipline, whose first seminal texts, by Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, were published in 1958, with the former inaugurating the discipline in the late 1960s at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the University of Birmingham. Since then it has spread across the world, in the process mutating and developing different emphases according to the academic traditions and imperatives within which it finds itself.

Williams traced the historical development of the English term 'culture' from the 15th century, where it was used in two contexts - one concerning honour and worship, and the other in 'husbandry, the tending of natural growth' (1976: 77). From here he charted a path towards two further usages, still commonly utilised today. The first is one in which a ruling section of society perceives itself and its social forms to be 'cultured' (as in 'cultivated'). These are used as a contrast with the lifestyles of other sections of society perceived as lacking in those qualities.

The second usage, initially linked with the term 'folk' to produce 'folk culture', constructed 'an alternative idea of human development ... to the ideas not centered on "civilisation" and "progress"' (*ibid*). It wished to support the values of the agrarian era, particularly the values found in the lives of the 'common people', perceived as intimately connected to 'Nature', and whose societies were perceived as being organised according to more 'collective' values. This concept was 'used to attack ... the "mechanical" character of the new civilisation then emerging: both for its abstract rationalism and for the "inhumanity" of current industrial development' (p.79).

Once the agrarian class had been moved en masse to populate new industrial towns, a new class emerged and took form. The social and political organisation and the cultural behaviour of this 'working class', the speed of its proliferation, and the increased power gained for itself, all combined to alarm the 'cultured' classes.

Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) warned of the consequences of the spread of this 'philistine culture', which would be hastened by the extension of literacy and democracy. In order to lessen the effects of that culture, and replace them by the more 'civilising' values of the ruling class, the discipline of English Literature was established in schools and universities in 1918.

However, this provided a platform for radical liberal humanists like F.R. Leavis, who:

> 'led a vanguard of English petit-bourgeois students ... [who] pitted against the ruling class ... their own vigorously independent, hardworking and sternly conscientious set of values.' (Inglis, 1993: 38)

These values were seen as originating with the ancestors of those students, the agrarian classes, progressing through the Romantic revolution and its assertion of individual responsibility and potential, into the folk-cultural tradition, epitomised in the work of D.H. Lawrence.

Inglis identifies three 'master values'; a close study of the text and the development of a

methodology and tone of 'judicious detachment'; a surrendering to the elevating and enlightening pleasures within a text 'until a very different standing-outside-of-oneself is attainable' (ibid, p.15), one which nevertheless has to be integrated into that same judicious detachment.

The third, implicit in the desire to follow one's personal beliefs and to confront authority when necessary, asserted both 'the inevitable creativeness of everyday life' (Leavis in Inglis, p.42), *and* the belief in the concept of 'community', as opposed to the capitalist ideology of individualism.

Hoggart (1958) applied Leavis' principles to the study of everyday working class community and culture, whilst Williams also attempted to construct Leavis' 'organic, common culture' into a more explicitly socialist analysis of culture within society. These two approaches then converged to form the new discipline of Cultural Studies at the CCCS. Under Hall, the themes of working-class resistance and cultural conflict were foregrounded and examined (Hall and Jefferson, 1976) and these themes have since been extended to the cultural resistance found in other minorities.

2. Relevance of the Tradition for this Study

Because Cultural Studies is actually predicated on re-discovering or re-presenting the voice of the working class and agrarian subaltern, the relevance to this study is clear. Likewise, since the discipline is ostensibly an *activist* discipline, validating subaltern culture goes hand in hand with creating political change by revealing the hidden dimensions of capitalist forces and cultural politics. In this respect it has much in common with the principles of critical ethnography, but is centred around cultural theory rather than methodology. It is these theories which enable us to move on from anthropology to develop an understanding of Deaf culture as essentially *an oppositional culture*.

The master-value concerning close textual study is of relevance to our examination of Deaf cultural activities once we extend the concept beyond 'text-as-book' to 'text-as-cultural event / artefact'. This must be read 'across the grain' in order to extract as

many levels and dimensions of meaning as possible.

The value of 'surrendering to the text' is particularly important. Reductionist readings of Deaf community life are the norm in medical and social control models. Instead, by seeking to allow the Deaf text, whether as cultural event or ethnographic interview, to convey its *emotional* importance, resonance and range without trying to reduce it to previously developed academic categories is crucial if we to credit the true breadth and depth of Deaf subaltern culture. Validating such emotional resonance allows the 'poetry' of that perspective to come through. It also enables deeper and more vital levels of connection to be made across different sets of cultural features, fields and domains within the Deaf experience. This is in essence what Williams (1975) refers to as the 'structure of feeling' of a culture, and for this study appears highly compatible both with Geertz' 'thick description' concept in Chapter 3, and the importance placed on 'subjectivity' within Women's Studies (MacKinnon, 1982).

Furthermore, the value of willingness to confront existing majority cultural norms and assert the 'creativeness of everyday community life' enables the study to valorise everyday Deaf subaltern activity, recognising symbolic importance particularly in the minutiae of examples, which academia and colonialists find insignificant. Finally, CCCS validates the concept of subaltern researcher; it implies that insights into working-class culture could not be so easily supplied by researchers external to those communities.

3. Later Developments in Cultural Studies

Casting widely for theories to refine and expand cultural analysis, Cultural Studies found compatible analytical tools in continental structuralism, neo-Marxism, and semiotics, emerging with what Turner (1990) identifies as five basic theoretical approaches to culture, three of which are useful for this study.

Barthes (1975) applied Saussure's linguistic principles to social and cultural features of contemporary urban societies, isolating each sign, ('the smallest unit of communication within a language system' - Turner, 1990: 17), into its denotations and connotations,

creating a 'chain of signification of ascending complexity and cultural specificity' (p.18). These were brought to bear on contemporary capitalist society to reveal the impulses which lay behind the 'natural' or 'innocent' cultural imagery used by ruling classes in the media and other cultural forms which they controlled or influenced.

Althusser's (1984) crucial concept of 'ideology' was expanded. Earlier versions of Marxism had constructed ideology as a kind of cultural filter imposed on the working class, disguising its 'real' relations to the society around them, a filter which was at all times subject to economic and political determinism. The work of Althusser and colleagues asserted that a third force, namely culture, had a vital role in a *network* of determinations, and was thus able to assert that ideology 'not only produces our culture, it also produces our consciousness of ourselves' (p.27). Thus for Hall (1983), drawing on the work of the Frankfurt School and on the structuralist ideas above, ideology becomes *the actual site of struggles within a culture*, the battleground which different social groups contest for the control of their cultural 'reality'.

Thirdly, Althusser's implications were refined by reference to the ideas of Lacan. Since ideology is an implicit cultural force, our unconscious is also formed by it, and the notion of a single individual self dissolves into a series of selves, 'subjectivities', which can be contradictory and changeable; when deconstructed they can enlighten us both to the origins and impetus behind these subjectivities and to the different discursive weight and prestige that they carry. This essentially post-modernist concept has proved useful in Women's studies and Black studies and is elaborated in 3.5.2.

Another important conceptual tool arose from concerns about over-determinism and the role of the individual agent similar to those we have seen in anthropology. Hall (1977-slack126) re-presented the earlier ideas of the Italian neo-Marxist, Gramsci, particularly his concept of hegemony. Gramsci (1971) saw the struggles between classes less in terms of ideological domination per se, and more in terms of a constant and ongoing struggle for hegemony - that is, for moral, cultural, intellectual and thereby political leadership of a society. Crucially, hegemony is not maintained by simply suppressing the opposition, but by selective absorption of opposing cultural interests into its own ideologies, attempting to secure *the cultural consent of those governed*. Cultural forms

and manifestations thus form the battleground for the control of society.

There are three notable effects of the concept of hegemony. Cultural change is finally accomodated within the theoretical framework of the discipline. Thus the historicising process can re-enter the framework, enabling the construction of cultural power at specific historical moments to be addressed. This validates once more the study of individual 'texts'.

Thirdly, by applying a historical dimension to structuralist theories of signs and significations, their combinations within particular culturally specific *discourses* can be examined. This has led to the development of further terminology, most importantly the concept of 'social construction', applicable to a wide range of studies, from Dyer's (1986) study of Marilyn Monroe vis a vis discourses of constructions of sexuality in the 1950s, to Showalter's (1987) account of the 19th century's construction of, and therefore treatment of, madness.

Attempts to situate the individual agent within this construct are still very recent. Gramsci (1981: 194) suggests an approach which unites this with an introduction of psychological and even spiritual dimensions, defining culture thus:

> It is organisation, discipline of one's inner self, a coming to terms with one's personality; it is the attainment of a higher awareness, with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one's own historical value, one's own function in life, and one's own rights and obligations. (in Bennett *et al*, 1981: 194)

Although this definition is useful on a wider scale, it is particularly appropriate for oppressed members of cultures, where the struggle to transcend imposed models is seen as a priority.

4. Relevance for Deaf Cultural Study

The four approaches above are important for Deaf cultural study; they validate the perception that in cultures which are striving to maintain their own values in the face of

oppression, many ordinary everyday acts and beliefs *become* fundamentally political / oppositional. Recognising this enables us to penetrate beneath surface readings of Deaf culture and glean a deeper reading of a 'collective resistance', which is not necessarily conventional resistance, but simply carrying out one's everyday cultural values in a hostile world.

Ideology as the site of cultural struggle is important on two levels. The first concerns 'external' struggles, in the domains where the Deaf community contests cultural meanings with majority society. The second is 'internal', and is crucial for this study. Oppression results in a perception of minority cultures as homogenous entities; yet the reality is that divisions within these cultures *may have even greater significance than in majority cultures*. The extent to which different sectors of minority communities support or reject the values and beliefs imposed on them leads to intense internal ideological struggles; both this intense cultural pressure and the positions themselves must be identified and explored for an accurate reading of Deaf culture.

In this respect the concept of self as a series of subjectivities is even more important. Some aspects and domains of the self may overtly reject oppressive ideologies, whilst others may covertly and subconsciously absorb them. The classic example is the petit-bourgeoisie, framed as upwardly-aspiring working-class, an issue with emerging relevance for African-Americans (Landry, 1987). Another example is concerned with how the latter absorb ideas about American superiority which affect their attempts to develop solidarity with the rest of the African diaspora (Gilroy, 1993b). Similarly, some Deaf subalterns may aspire to certain 'hearing' ideals, or 'rebels' absorb notions of the superiority of English.

Understanding hegemony is helpful to us on four levels. The first enabled us in Chapter 1 to develop an understanding of the ways in which majority cultures have assigned responsibility and power to certain sectors of society (the 'specialists') for all matters concerning Deaf people and their community. Once theories of ideology enable us to deconstruct attitudes towards those with hearing impairment in general and Deaf people in particular, hegemonic theories enable us to deconstruct the ways in which members of the majority culture are manipulated into giving their consent for whichever actions the

specialists deem necessary.

The second concerns the ways which members of the Deaf community itself are manipulated or pressured into consenting with the received ideologies. This in turn leads to a third dimension, where different Deaf elites have developed their own ideologies towards their colleagues; this enables us to analyse how different subjectivities and ideologies coalesce and 'enforce' that hegemony, whilst the fourth dimension is concerned with how the Deaf subalterns gave 'consent' to those ideologies.

Finally, Gramsci's definition of culture focuses attention on questions of Deaf attempts to transcend the limits placed by Oralism on their individual and collective value, and the importance of historical awareness in attaining that transcendence.

All these enable us to revise 'monolithic' models of Deaf culture as a 'noun', and to construct it instead as a pluralistic site wherein its members *contest* Deaf cultural meanings.

3.5 POST-MODERNIST AND OTHER RECENT THEORIES

Recent cross-disciplinary developments, based around or responding to post-modernism, offer the following cultural theories of relevance for this study. Post-modernism has been concerned that modernist theories such as those found within Cultural Studies do not account for the realities of post-industrial societies, where the effects of consumerism and the mass-media carry their own unique weight. This has led to a retroactive suspicion of the effectiveness of any 'Grand Narratives' like socialism, capitalism or patriarchy, questioning the extent to which they could ever offer a comprehensive explanation; indeed whether any single explication is possible, thus positively valuing multiplicity, uncertainty and creativity.

1. Resistance and Pleasure

One concern for post-modernism is how the concept of ideology fails to acknowledge and thus account for, ways in which individuals and groups construct their own realities

and responses to political and cultural domination. De Certeau (1984), in examining the ways in which the 'practices of everyday life' are carried out, in the workplace, in schools, in structuring one's own home, in one's selection and re-arrangement of consumer goods, illustrates how people, whilst 'making do' with the forms presented to them, 'make them over' to their own ends. This resistance is perceived by de Certeau as 'pleasure' oriented, aesthetically governed, and thus to some degree operating separately from ideology. This has relevance for ways in which Deaf communities adopt similar processes with regard to language and other features.

2. Hybrid Identities and Subjectivities

The notions of the created self above and the multiple cultural selves of 3.4.3 have been extended by some post-modernist theoreticians to deal with multiple identities which have been created *across* cultural boundaries, by Gilroy (1993a) in Black Studies, Hall (1993) in Cultural Studies and Bhabha (1994) in Post-Colonial Studies. All share the belief that cultural identities are not inherent, bounded or static, but are dynamic, fluid and constructed situationally in particular places and times. Some writers are beginning to propose that this is 'not just an urban phenomenon of the 1990s' (Wright, 1998), but a concept which may always have existed in some, if not all, earlier societies.

It is highly relevant for individuals in the Deaf community who were not socialised into Deaf culture, but had to create their own identities, moving from 'hearing-impaired / deaf' to 'Deaf'. Likewise the limited everyday contact between Deaf people also leaves more 'space' for self-construction in the absence of social and cultural support. Similarly, the co-existence of two polarised identities, 'Deaf' and 'Hearing' operating both within individuals and collective life, has numerous cultural ramifications.

3. Essentialism and Anti-essentialism

A major issue for all minority cultures is the extent to which essentialism plays a role in their collective self-conception. Initially essentialism was a product of a colonial gaze which saw each native group as homogenous. The post-colonialist reaction against this has been reinforced by many theorists within Black Studies and Women's Studies;

augmented by post-modernist refutations of Grand Narratives, essentialism has become almost a pariah in contemporary cultural discourse.

This is unfortunate for groups like Deaf communities who are still struggling to conceptualise their post-colonial identity, and who have traditionally ascribed assertive meanings to the idea of 'Deaf', as well as to the common biological facts inherent in being 'Deaf-Mute'. However there are those who feel that it is impossible to completely discard the concept (Walby, 1990), especially in Women's Studies where there has been a significant assertion of woman's basic biological realities as an eradicable marker of difference (Daly, 1979), whilst in Post-Colonial Studies, Spivak argues for the necessity of a 'strategic essentialism' as a means of breaking the contemporary theroretical deadlock. These latter discourses are in their infancy, but reinforce my belief that essentialist concepts such as Deafhood are at the least strategically viable for the foreseeable future.

4. Diasporic Theories

Although this concept originated within Jewish Studies, it has been taken up by some post-modernists as an important central concept (Gilroy, 1993b). A culture is said to contain diasporic features if it has migrated out from a central point of origin and is now found in different countries and continents in culturally mutated forms. Its importance for future cultural theory lies in bringing into dialogue both the essentialist (shared cultural features) and the hybridity (variation within cultural identities) discourses, offering a site for further exploration.

Diasporic theory is important to Deaf culture, not because Deaf people share a common geographical origin, but because they are unique in being *the only linguistic group to have a community in every country in the world*. Awareness of this, together with an awareness of sign language as a language with uniquely global connotations, is central to many Deaf subalterns' self-concept and pride. However, diasporic theory is still very new, and the Deaf contribution to it requires more space than is available to this study.

5. Discourse Theories

In this post-modernist context we must also note the usefulness of the discourse theories delineated in chapter 2, which have already informed the study in the description of the treatment of Deaf communities in Western history.

6. Summary

Post-modernist cultural theories offer great scope for analysing aspects of Deaf culture. Since they are new, utilising them as a primary tool to unpick Deaf culture is difficult; however they can be said to have brought to a head the investigative process begun by anthropology and cultural studies, offering a multiplicity of themes which can be drawn on in this study at strategic points.

However, a common criticism of post-modernism is that it does not take sufficient account of the different political weighting carried by various cultural features, nor of the disparity in power-bases. To accomodate such features, we must look to Bourdieu.

7. Bourdieu's Epistemology

Bourdieu shares with the post-modernists a concern for epistemologies which emphasise indeterminacy and flexibility, and which also conceive of the place for the individual actor within a culture. However, he parts company with them in his belief that an overarching theory can in fact be worked towards and developed. There are many aspects of his work which are of relevance for this study; some are highlighted below.

One of Bourdieu's primary concerns is to reconcile or to straddle the antimonies which are so prevalent in social science, whether between the 'individual' and 'society', synchronic and diachronic theories, between subjectivist and objectivist epistemologies, between symbolism and materialism, or between theory and research. To do this he takes an initially structuralist position, that social phenomena and culture are grounded primarily within relationships, but then moves beyond the discreteness of manifested forms to assert that they interpenetrate each other (Bourdieu, 1992).

This interpenetration informs another major conceptual theory; society consists of relationships between '*fields*', '*agents*', and their '*habitus*'. Fields are conceived of as relatively autonomous spheres of play with their own values, rules and centres of gravity, where each contains *social and cultural capital* which reflects and is reflected by the social power and prestige of each field (ibid).

Each field however, is a contested terrain where boundaries are not easily identifiable because they are always at stake in the contestations within the field, and it is these contestations which support his assertion of the fundamental *indeterminacy* of cultural life. He resists the idea of a homogenous State system or apparatus except as a 'terminal' form of field development in totalitarian societies and situations, seeing the ruling class as an ensemble of fields and groups rather than a monolithic entity (ibid).

Individuals are conceived of as agents rather than passive recipients of a cultural system - although they are socialised to a degree, they are able to develop strategies of their own, which are reflected to some extent in the amount of cultural capital each possesses (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

However this by itself cannot explain individual tendencies and strategies, nor the patterning mechanisms which each field imposes on the individual. To this end the concept of habitus acts as a 'Janus-face', where the individual's habitus on the one hand constrains and shapes them to some degree, but on the other manifests itself in *a range of dispositions*. One is disposed towards certain beliefs and behaviour but there are numerous possibilities within that disposition (ibid).

These three concepts are conceptually inseperable, bound up in dialectical relationships, and allow for generative theories of multiple beliefs and actions which are therefore historically situated. By extrapolation, Bourdieu is also able to develop analyses of the socio-political construction of academia, the 'false' conceptual authority of disciplinary boundaries, and the spurious roles played by the intellectual classes in general, all of which are grounded in another important concept - *reflexivity*.

Although the above has much in common with the theories of critical ethnography described in chapter 1, Bourdieu's 'structuralist' approach sees the latter as essentially individualistic and in danger of reifying those individuals who utilise it. By grounding the individual's reflexivity in their habitus, so that one is forced to examine one's own social background and the dispositions which form part of it, the academic / intellectual / researcher's status and behaviour is demystified (Bourdieu, 1993). Such demystification is presented, not only as an important political tool, but as a necessary prerequisite for a truly disinterested and objective science, and forms the basis of my self-analysis as subaltern-researcher in Chapter 2.

8. Bourdieu's Relevance for Deaf Cultural Study

Most of the cultural theories examined in this chapter, despite their usefulness, do not cover the particular situation of a Deaf culture completely surrounded and permeated by a majority culture and its materiality, where cultural transmission through ethnicity is problematic, and where individual Deaf identity processes are disrupted by a particularly intense form of educational oppression. Many Deaf social and cultural forms resemble those of majority culture - however *their expressions are different*, in ways which we have not yet examined. Bourdieu's conceptual framework offers a means by which to explore all these issues, suggesting that the range of Deaf individual and collective dispositions may offer an important explanatory mechanism, as will later be seen. It comes close to being a conceptual framework for this study.

However, because it is an initial study, it is not possible to generate a model which is congruent with the full range of Bourdieu's theories, nor necessarily advisable to impose an external model as we have seen. Thus it is more appropriate to draw on his theories at relevant points.

3.6 SUB-CULTURAL THEORIES

Having explored theories situated around macrocosmic cultures, it is now necessary to examine those which specifically examine minority and bi-cultural groupings.

Sub-cultural theories rose to contemporary prominence under Cultural Studies; however, the concept was first developed within sociology, (Lee, 1945; Gordon, 1947), and used in the broadest terms as 'a subdivision of a national culture' (Brake, 1985: 7). Downes (1966) was among the first to argue that a distinction had to be made between different types of sub-divisions, between those sub-groups which emerge as a result of the demands of majority society structures, and those which developed in response to what Brake characterises as:

> Meaning systems, modes of expression or life styles developed by groups in subordinate structural positions ... which reflect their attempt to solve structural contradictions arising from the wider societal context. (p.8)

The thread which links sub-cultures to Cultural Studies has been described by Hall and Jefferson (1976) thus:

> Our starting point, as for so many others, was Howard Becker's 'Outsiders' - the text which, at least for us, best signalled the 'break' [with] mainstream sociology. (p.5)

In this context, this 'break' can be described as a movement away from the reading of sub-cultures according to a deviance model to one which utilises the three master-values described earlier.

The social groups defined as sub-cultures and studied as such were initially youth cultures. The term has now been extended to cover 'criminal' sub-groups and others such as gay and lesbian sub-groups. The significance for this study in that *all have grown up with a shared national culture* which the sub-group then rebels against for a variety of reasons, proceeding to create sets of cultural meanings of its own to serve a

variety of purposes.

Sub-cultural theories are particularly useful for examining the collective responses of Deaf communities to the attitudes and actions of majority societies. They are also useful in enabling us to consider the ways in which Deaf communities are both similar and - crucially - dissimilar to sub-cultures.

1. Sub-cultures and Minority Cultures

The most important issue is whether Deaf and other minority cultures should be perceived as sub-cultures, or some other entity. In this context, Downes (1966) has argued that:

> Sub-cultures originating from within a society can be differentiated from those that originate from without, such as with immigrant groups or traditions. This particularly holds true for ethnic or minority cultures. (paraphrased by Brake, 1985: 7)

Unfortunately this analysis is not developed further, but consideration of the differences ensuing from two different sites of cultural origin reveal three strands worthy of further evaluation.

In the first strand, taking Asian communities in the UK as an example, it is clear that their cultural life is based on origins and traditions developed outside the UK. Deaf communities do not originate from outside the majority society in this sense. However, what is described above as 'traditions originating from without' can be reworded as 'separate origins and development'. Under this refinement, there is sufficient theoretical space to initiate the argument that traditional Deaf communities have to a degree developed separately from majority cultures via the Deaf residential schools.

The second strand is that of language. If a community uses a radically different language to the majority, it can be argued that their worldview is consequently radically different. Turner (1990) paraphrasing Saussure asserts that:

> Language does not name an already organised and coherent reality... The function of language is to organize, to construct, indeed to provide us with our only access to reality. (p.13)

Although it can be argued that this is overdeterministic, the idea that meaning is culturally grounded and mediated leads nevertheless to the conclusion that:

> Different cultures may not only use different language systems, but they also, in a definitive sense, *inhabit different worlds*. (pp.14-15, original emphasis)

In the case of Deaf communities, there are two aspects to this linguistic strand which are especially pertinent. The first is that prior to residential school life, and outside the Deaf environment, Deaf people are unable to access the majority language through which an understanding of majority culture is mediated. This reinforces the argument for 'separate origins and development'. Secondly, once they have learned sign languages as their first language, their primary worldview is then shaped by this lens. Thus even whilst co-existing with majority society, they have always *'inhabited a different world'*. This is reflected in the central sign language trope of 'Deafworld' (Lane *et al*, 1996). Furthermore, the source of that language is either the older Deaf children in the school (Reilly, 1995), or the Deaf children of Deaf parents, who bring the language into the school from home (Johnson and Erting, 1989); one can argue therefore that the language originates, *for the most part,* from outside the majority culture.

This in turn leads to a crucial historical moment in this study, given that the existence of 'Deaf culture' is doubted by so many, both inside and outside the community. Since the culture of a group is mediated by its language, it follows that *those groups with different languages from the majority also have different cultures from the majority*. Furthermore, those Deaf children of Deaf parents accept the responsibility to pass on and explain to the other children, information about the world of Deaf clubs, of local and national social activities, and other features that, when taken together, amount to

Downes' 'outside traditions'.

The significance for Deaf communities is that these theories suggest that Deaf cultures *are therefore not sub-cultures of the majority society, but cultures in their own right.* However, to term them cultures is insufficient to mark their particular status and characteristics. In this respect it is more meaningful to describe them as minority-cultures.

Within this context, it is useful to refer to other minority cultures where similar patterns obtain, notably the example of African-Americans. Although a case can be made for a history of separate development under 'Jim Crow' laws, it is the question of whether Black English is a separate language from American English, or simply one of its dialects, that is crucial in confirming whether their lives are best regarded as sub-cultural or minority-cultural. On this subject, one of the leading voices of Black Studies, Henry Gates, remarks:

> We have been deconstructing white people's language since that dreadful day in 1619 when we were marched off the boat in Virginia. Derrida did not invent deconstruction, *we* did! (italics in original, During (ed), 1993: 127)

Systematic descriptions are given of such 'deconstruction' by Herskovits (1958) and Levine (1977). The former highlights the use of Africanisms within Black English, and the latter the adaptation of American English to manifest Black realities. The evidence collected here and elsewhere leads almost to the position that Black Americans are minority-cultural and that Black English, although containing considerable amounts of English, is actually linguistically impelled by *both* its origins from without and their separate development within the USA.

Another useful parallel is the case of Native Americans and other First Nation peoples, who unquestionably originated from within the country, yet whose evolution took place very separately from the latterly-developed white majority cultures. In this case also, possession of their own languages and cultures marked the existence of worldviews that owed nothing to the consensual majority cultural reality (Churchill, 1984).

In summary then, certain aspects of sub-cultural theory are of relevance to the study, but its most useful contribution is to help us distinguish ways in which Deaf cultures differ from majority sub-cultures so that they can be classified as minority-cultural.

3.7 BI-CULTURAL THEORIES

Bi-cultural theories are the least developed of all the theories in this chapter; this is unfortunate since they are importance to a conceptualisation of Deaf culture in that, if Deaf communities have developed bona-fide cultures, their existence inside majority cultures, together with the large numbers of Deaf people being brought up within hearing families, therefore suggests some degree of bi-culturalism. One might therefore expect bi-cultural theories to offer a means by which to assess the actual impact of one culture upon another in this way. However, the Webster's dictionary definition of bi-culture is ' The existence of two distinct cultures in one nation' (in Paulston, 1992: 116).

This definition is a useful starting point, but soon breaks down, begging the question not only of what might constitute 'distinct', and but also by its assertion that bi-lingual situations occur only in countries with a total of two cultures. In countries where a plurality of cultures exist, should this be regarded as a collectivity of bi-lingual situations, or a multi-cultural entity ? These definitional difficulties render the already complex questions around bi-culturality and multiculturality even more problematic.

Unfortunately, Paulston finds that 'There is virtually nothing written on bi-culturalism' (ibid, p.116), and goes on to describe the use of the term in recent academic work as:

> ... almost invariably in the sense of the almost slogan-like 'bi-lingual / bi-cultural education programmes', where such dissertations *typically ignore the bi-cultural element* and rather examine language proficiency or self-concept. (p.116, my italics)

Proceeding to examine definitions of culture as they impinge on bi-culturalism, she concludes that ' the emphasis is always on the patterned behaviour of the group - not on

the behaviour of individuals who cross the boundaries of ethnic groups ' (p.117). Given the immense complexity of cultural theories as evidenced in this chapter, the lack of attention to this further complication is not really surprising.

However, it may well prove to be the case that more extensive studies of bi-culturalism will assist those struggling to define culture, by approaching the phenomenon from the opposite direction, as it were. If resources are invested in the exploration of bi-culturalism it may be possible to locate patterns which help us to see in which domains individuals within any one culture construct their identification with that culture, and in which they intentionally deviate from it.

Keesing's competence and performance approach described in 3.3.5 allows one, in Paulston's words, 'to deal with the difference between a collective ideational system and the psychodynamics of the individual' (*ibid*: 119). Nevertheless, utilising this approach raises the question of whether bi-cultural individuals have only one set of cultural competence, but two (or more) sets of performances. Although this issue is in the earliest stages of development, Kleinjams' model (1975) appears to be helpful.

He suggests that a model for learning a second culture delineates three categories of what is learned - cognition, affection, and action. Cognition is concerned with knowing the what and why about another culture, and can be partially learned from outside the culture. Affection concerns the process which begins with 'coming to know and like another culture'. Action moves through three stages: changing one's values; changing the direction of one's life as a result of adopting some of those values; and finally in some cases to 'becoming one with the people of the other culture'. This would appear to offer the beginnings of an analytical framework.

Nevertheless, with regard to cultural competence, the task of analysis is made harder by Keesing's insistence that competence does not have to involve a complete understanding of everything which occurs in any one culture. As Paulston comments:

> An obvious difference between bi-lingualism and bi-culturalism is that when you speak Swedish or English, it is perfectly obvious which set of

> rules you are drawing on. But with behaviour, it is not necessarily clear just which cultural system your performance rules belong to. (*ibid*: 125)

Furthermore, it appears that bi-cultural theory has not examined the different types of situations in which the phenomenon ocuurs. Such situations range from Paulston's more 'voluntary' bi-culturalism (that is, from freedom of movement between two Western nations), through varying degrees of imposed bi-culturalism (as evidenced by traditional colonialism), through bi-culturalism imposed by a majority culture on its own minority cultures, (as evidenced by Spanish-Catalan struggles, or spoken language-signed language struggles), to bi-culturalism arising from enslavement or 'involuntary migration' (African-American and Irish experiences).

In the case of the Deaf experience, there is a further significant difference. Almost all bicultural theory, especially as it relates to educational issues, is based around the concept that there is one language at home (the mother tongue) and another at school (the dominant language). Yet the Deaf child brought up in the UK, or indeed almost anywhere in the known world, has for the best part of a century had no access at all to the home language, in theory its dominant language. In fact, for Deaf children the situation is reversed. When attending a Deaf school, they begin to learn their real mother tongue, and as linguistic research has shown, decode the basic grammatical rules very quickly.

All told, although bi-cultural theory and practice is most appropriate for the investigation of Deaf culture, the virtual absence of research means that it is of limited assistance to the present study. Nevertheless, if one draws on the cultural theories from earlier sections, it is possible to begin to examine Deaf bi-culturalism in respect of those other theories, and thus bring this investigation into a sharper focus.

3.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter, in reviewing the most prominent disciplines from which theories of culture have been generated, has encountered tremendous epistemological variation. This, together with the unique social status of Deaf communities which fall between medical,

social, linguistic and cultural definitions, results in the absence of a single theoretical base from which to link Deaf culture and culture in general.

Nevertheless, as indicated in the text, several aspects of cultural theory within each of the disciplines studied have relevance in initiating a model of Deaf culture. The relative usefulness of each can only be fully assessed after an examination of the work so far carried out on Deaf culture, to which we now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEAF CULTURE

Discourses And Definitions

This chapter reviews discourses and controversies around terms denoting Deaf Culture, which are compared with general cultural theory from Chapter 3. These assessments identify paths along which this present study might proceed.

There are essentially four discourse strands around 'Deaf culture'. Two are situated in the English print media; the first in academic texts and journals and the second in the wider Deaf media of newspapers and professional magazines. The other two are rendered in sign languages; one conducted by Deaf professionals in sign language-based workshops and rarely translated into English. The other is subaltern Deaf discourse whose existence has barely been registered. I have confined the review in the main to English-using countries; there appears to be minimal literature in other languages.

4.1 TERMINOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

The term 'Deaf Culture' emerged very recently from (mostly hearing) academic circles during the late 1970s, although there is also a limited literature on cultural features under such headings as 'subcultures' (Lunde, 1956), 'Deaf community life' (Higgins, 1980) or 'social aspects of deafness' (Christiansen and Meisegeier, 1986).

The BSL term 'DEAF CULTURE' appeared in BSLTA courses around 1985, apparently inspired by the need to translate the English term for teaching purposes. Very little of this discourse has been printed - a small amount is available on 'official' videos, and the rest on 'private' videos used for university teaching purposes. These being inaccessible, I refer to translated teaching materials, handouts and notes from

these sources.

Subaltern-generated signs for concepts similar to 'Deaf Culture' are discussed in 3.3. There is virtually no printed or video discourse around these terms.

4.2 ENGLISH-GENERATED DEFINITIONS

'Culture' in relation to descriptions of Deaf collective life occurs first in Stokoe, Casterline and Croneberg (1965) where an appendix describes the 'social and cultural characteristics of deaf people', no distinction being made between the two terms. In 1971 Schlesinger and Meadow stated (without further explanation) that 'profound deafness is much more than a medical diagnosis; it is a cultural phenomenon'. By 1976, Padden and Markowitz were defining community as 'a group of persons who share a common culture', and applying this to Deaf communities.

The first mention in the UK, and possibly anywhere, of 'Deaf Culture' appears in subaltern literature of the NUD in 1977. Two examples are given:

> To encourage Deaf theatre groups to perform for hearing people, but also to act from the heritage of our Deaf culture, not only from the hearing one. (p.10)

The other simply states 'To get sign language and Deaf culture onto a University course and downwards [*sic*], as in the USA' (p.11). However there is no attempt to explain what might constitute such a phenomenon.

In 1978 in the USA, Rutherford developed a course in 'History and Culture of the Deaf Community' ('the first of its kind nationally' - Rutherford, 1993: vii), although the contents of this course are not known.

Baker and Cokely (1980) establish a contrast between definitions of Deaf people from 'clinical-pathological' and 'cultural' perspectives. However they do not use the latter term again, listing instead four factors, 'linguistic, political, audiological, and social',

with the last doing duty for what might now be thought of as cultural. Their approach is perhaps the most influential of perspectives; Kyle and Woll (1985) summarise that '[this seems] to be the most consistent of the theroretical views of the community' (p.8).

It is not until Padden (1980) that a specific definition is attempted, headed 'the culture of American Deaf people'. Having taken culture to mean 'A set of learned behaviours of a group of people who have their own language, values, rules for behaviour, and traditions' (in Baker and Battison, p.92), she then states:

> Members of the Deaf culture behave as Deaf people do, use the language of Deaf people, and share the beliefs of Deaf people towards themselves and other people who are not Deaf. (p.93)

and concludes that 'the most striking characteristics of the culture of Deaf people is their cultural values - these values shape how Deaf people behave and what they believe in' (p.95).

In 1980 Higgins published his account of Deaf community life in Chicago. Together with Carmel (1987a), this constitutes the most detailed description of a Deaf community, although Schein and Delk (1974), Kyle and Allsop (1982a), Neisser (1983), Jackson (1986) and Schein (1989) all contain much significant information. Their descriptions of aspects of Deaf community life also cover much that would now be understood as Deaf culture, but only the latter two explicitly refer to the concept.

Like the others, Higgins' study is sociological, taking his lead from Becker's concept of 'outsiders', describing features like membership issues and attitudes of different groups of Deaf people to each other, all situated as aspects of 'deaf community life' (p.38).

In 1981, Freeman, Carbin and Boese devoted a chapter of their handbook for parents of Deaf children to the subject of 'Deaf culture'. Their definition is founded on Tylor's definition but is not systematically explored, although, as Kyle and Woll (1985: 9) note:

> In their usage, culture is distinct from community in that it includes the

> knowledge, belief, art, morals, and law as well as the practices of members of the community.

The first British article on the subject of Deaf culture also occurs in 1981, when Brien applied Baker and Cokely's analysis to the UK Deaf community. During the 1980s, use of the term spread widely, although most described aspects of Deaf culture - notably Myhre's (1983) 12-page bibliography - rather than attempting to measure or comprehend its totality. Bienvenu and Columnos (1986), Kannapell (1989), Ladd (1995), Schein (1989) and Kyle (1991) begin to use the term as an all-encompassing framework and give taxonomic descriptions, some of which are rather unsystematically constructed. The focus of these perspectives can be described under three headings - pedagogical, linguistic, and political.

Pedagogical accounts inform Deaf people of the existence of the concept, relating it to what they already understand of their own lives (Bienvenu and Columnos, 1986; Kannapell, 1992) or explain it to mixed groups of Deaf and hearing people (Rutherford, 1985; Ladd, 1995; Kyle, 1991).

Linguistic accounts explain its importance in efficient learning of sign language (Stokoe *et al*, 1965; Baker and Cokely, 1980; Philip, 1987). Political accounts explain to those involved with Deaf education the need to shift from a medical model to a linguistic-cultural one (Freeman *et al*, 1981; Brien, 1991; Lane, 1993). There are also references to the term in Deaf and professional magazines, where it is either accepted as a given, or contested without supporting evidence.

4.3 SIGN LANGUAGE-GENERATED DEFINTIONS

The signed term 'DEAF CULTURE' being both recent and inspired from without, it is necessary to examine the history of equivalent signs in BSL and ASL.

The absence of research into 19th century Deaf publications makes it unclear whether terms like 'Deaf World or 'Silent World' were sign language or English-generated. However, DEAFWORLD has probably been in use for over a century in the USA and

UK, although different signs are used in ASL and BSL. Bahan (1994) appears to be the first to discuss such (American) subaltern signs in print when he discusses not only the term above, but also DEAF CROWD, DEAF THEREABOUTS, DEAF CLUB, AND DEAF^WORLD KNOWLEDGE ('^' in original text).

The latter four terms mark internal Deaf relationships, whilst DEAF^WORLD is used to contrast with an 'opposite' term HEARING^WORLD, which is used both as noun and adjective. Interestingly, Bahan does not mention two other signs in use in the USA, DEAF-HIS, and DEAF-WAY.

These latter two signs can also be found in the UK, DEAF-HIS appearing to pre-date DEAF-WAY. It is difficult to ascribe dates, but the former may be up to a century old, and the latter perhaps forty years old. Kyle and Woll are almost the only people to have mentioned these signs in print:

> We have frequently had the experience that deaf people questioned about such and such a happening will simply shake their heads and say 'it's the deaf way'. They are very clear in the division between what deaf people accept and what hearing people will understand. (1985: 9)

There are also signs in BSL for DEAFWORLD, DEAF-ALL-THEM, DEAF-ALL-OF-US and DEAF CLUB; these have not been discussed in print.

There is controversy within the community around the spread of the sign DEAF CULTURE, some arguing that the original Deaf terms such as DEAF-HIS and DEAF-WAY are good enough. Nevertheless, Bahan (1994: 245) describes how DEAF^CULTURE has not only begun to be accepted, but has started to develop an extra level of meaning: 'There are Deaf people who go out and say to others, "YOU NOT DEAF CULTURE".' Asserting that there was never a time when any Deaf person would go up to another and say 'YOU NOT DEAF WORLD', he concludes that:

> What the [first comment above] is making them do is to assess different things that they have internalized while growing up. It becomes an

> avenue for checking into the values and patterns that one has internalized in the hearing world. It is not that those hearing values are bad, but rather, it is a reminder that this is now our world you are in. (*ibid*) .

Bahan's conclusions lead one to ask whether past Deaf communities did not attempt to exclude or criticise other Deaf people, or whether it is simply the recent emergence of Deaf pride that has led to such distinctions. They also suggest that one can be in the Deaf World, but not have, or always manifest 'Deaf Culture'. This is important, as the data chapters will show.

4.4 ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVES ON DEAF CULTURE

Different writers have examined Deaf culture within frameworks they have devised or adopted.

1. Membership Perspectives

Once studies of community and culture began, researchers had to decide what might constitute membership of such a culture. Padden and Humphries (1988) proposed a refinement of Woodward's (1972) definition:

> We use the lowercase *deaf* when referring to the audiological condition of not hearing, and the uppercase*Deaf* when referring to a particular group of deaf people who share a language ... and a culture. (p.2)

This is a step forward from medical definitions, typified by Higgins (1980: 34):

> Members of the deaf community predominantly come from the 'prevocationally deaf', and perhaps even more so from those who lost [*sic*] their hearing before adolescence.

Distinguishing between audiological and cultural issues created the space for Deaf internal life to be examined. Without this, even sociological accounts tend to focus on audiological ways in which Deaf people are outsiders, rather than on what Deaf people

develop collectively as Becker (1963) does with other outsider groups. A Deaf person reading such accounts finds it difficult not to feel as though one is in a cage in a zoo.

Baker and Cokely's model (1980) distinguishes four membership criteria: audiological (having a hearing loss), linguistic, (using sign language), social (participation in Deaf social life) and political (influence in community organisation). They are represented by four partially overlapping circles; the central area is deemed to be the 'core' culturally Deaf community.

One of the most problematic issues is framing 'degrees of membership' to situate those deaf from birth but brought up outside the community, those deafened later in childhood, and those who lost hearing later in life. Likewise there are hearing children of Deaf parents who have internalised many Deaf cultural values, but express themselves at times in 'hearing' ways which create conflict. Finally there are those who work or socialise within the community but are not themselves Deaf.

Bienvenu and Colomnos' workshops (1989) proposed a model to schematise these differences, constructing three circles where the inner circle constitutes cultural membership, the second circle social membership, and the outer circle 'political membership'. This represents a start to resolving such issues.

2. Normative Perspectives

These approaches have built on Baker and Cokely (1980), and are developed by American Deaf writers who have taken the 'social' category, renamed it 'cultural', and focused on examples of 'norms', 'values', and traditions'. Kannapell (1992: 2) builds the first two into her definition of Deaf culture:

> A set of learned behaviours and perceptions that shape the values and norms of Deaf people based on their shared or common experiences.

Bienvenu and Colomnos (1989) extend these categories to include 'rules for behaviour' and 'identity', whilst Philip (1993) adds 'attitudinal deafness' to these.

Philip (1987: 55) also develops a slightly different set of categories:

> There are three important aspects, or dimensions, to any culture. The first is called the material dimension, and addresses the observable phenomenona in a culture. The normative dimension looks at the rules for behaviour. Finally the cognitive aspect deals with the attitudes, values, and world view.

These perspectives have had great influence on the current understanding of Deaf culture, being responsible for a modus operandi stressing comparisons between cultures as the way to maximise identification of Deaf cultural characteristics.

3. Symbolist Perspectives

The only published book-length text on Deaf culture, Padden and Humphries (1988), develops an anthropological perspective of what it means to operate from within one's Deaf identity, with themes such as 'learning to be Deaf', 'images of being', 'the meaning of sound', and 'historically created lives'. Their approach is explicitly influenced by Geertz:

> In Geertz's terms, the special condition of human beings is that their behaviors are guided by, indeed are dependent on, the presence of significant arrangements of symbols, which he calls 'culture'. (p.24)

Their text is significant for utilising ethnography to collect and classify examples of symbolic arrangements, of which they say, 'we rarely saw anything about these [...] in print' (p.9).

Carmel (1987) and Rutherford (1993), in their focus on Deaf identity issues, also work from anthropological perspectives to bring to the surface 'deeper' examples as manifested in symbolic relationships, focusing particularly on Deaf folklore.

4. Linguistic Perspectives

Each perspective above acknowledges the centrality of sign language to culture, but it does not neceassarily constitute the main thrust of their analysis. Other accounts, such as Kyle and Woll (1985), Kannapell (1989), Wilcox (1989), and Kyle (1991a), operate from linguistic and psycholinguistic perspectives, seeing sign language as the one clearly unique cultural characteristic of the Deaf community. As Kannapell (1977) eloquently puts it 'It is important to understand that ASL is the only thing we have that belongs to Deaf people completely'. A similar perspective underlies Bahan (1994).

5. Structuralist Perspectives

Stokoe (1989) is among the few to attempt this perspective, applying Trager and Hall's grid system to what he calls the 'ASL and English based cultures' (p.49), and attempting to map onto this 100 cell matrix some basic differences between 'Deaf American culture' and 'Mainstream American culture'. As yet, there have been few attempts by others to fill in these cells.

6. Ethnicity Perspectives

Johnson and Erting (1989) and Terstiep (1993) appear to be the only proponents of this perspective. The former is primarily linguistically focused, and is concerned that the treatments reviewed above are taxonomic: 'basically labeling theories which place people in groups on the basis of interpretations made by those who are doing the labeling ' (p.44). As they go on to say:

> Sets of traits that define the behaviours and attitudes of the members of a Deaf group are identified, and individuals are labeled as Deaf or not depending on the extent to which they exhibit those traits.

As a result they are concerned that:

> Such labels can correspond to salient behaviors and values of a cultural

> group but they are unlikely to provide substantial insight into the processes that account for the emergence and maintenance of those values and behaviours as identifying features... For this reason we align ourselves with anthropologists who study phenomena similar to the Deaf sociocultural experience under the title of ethnicity.

Although both they and Terstiep find mainstream definitions of ethnicity limited by lack of knowledge about the Deaf experience, they still find the concept able to explain more about that experience than traditional ideas of culture, particularly in respect of boundary relations. However, few writers have risen to their challenge.

7. Biological Perspectives

Although biology is almost always accompanied by a pathological perspective, Hall (1995) attempts to relate biological factors to a cultural reading. Although emphasising the symbolist perspective, he focuses on cultural differences marked as 'manifest-prescriptive' and 'personal-tacit'. The former constitutes:

> What people talk about and use in the course of the politics of everyday life, their 'designs for living', including myths, beliefs, values, dogmas, ideologies, religious beliefs and any other criteria for getting others to conform. (p.4)

The latter is not only shared by group members but also unique to each person. It includes the 'programming of the perceptual systems, including the senses', and includes three classes of 'body communication' and eight markers. Hall believes that these are generally 'out of awareness' of cultural members in a qualitatively different way than manifest-prescriptive features which result in actions or manifestations more easily studied. This perspective is valuable but does not clarify ways in which such features are specific to Deaf people.

8. Political Perspectives

Harris (1995) is the only example. Although she quotes Deaf subalterns more extensively than anyone except Higgins and Carmel, the absence of Deaf input at either

the planning or analytical stages contributes to a number of contentious extrapolations and conclusions. Her assessment, that deafness is 'a socio-political experience with a cultural meaning' (p.174) is hampered by inconsistencies in defining both culture and Deaf culture, and thus only confirms her starting perspective that socio-political categorisations have primacy.

9. 'Anthropological' Perspectives

I use this lable to distinguish Carmel's work (1980, 1987a), from the perspectives above. His accounts draw on linguistic, membership, ethnicity and structuralist perspectives, but are notable chiefly both for the amount of anthropological data given, and for an emphasis on examining diversity within the Deaf community. He concludes that 'this diversity is truly one of the most important cultural phenomena in Deaf culture as it is in all cultures' (1987: 336). It is somewhat puzzling that there is virtually no reference to his work in the subsequent literature - his perspectives have neither been adopted nor even challenged.

10. Summary

The nine perspectives being very recently developed, there have been few attempts to cross-reference each, apart from Turner (1994a, 1994b), and thus to begin to find a workable consensus. Likewise, since most have not produced a sustained subaltern-oriented ethnography, there is little 'hard data' for others to re-interpret.

Thus most of these perspectives remain taxonomic, focusing on differences between Deaf and 'hearing' cultures rather than exploring Deaf culture in and of itself. Consequently they fall victim to what Wright (1998) has summarised in another context as 'the old idea of culture':

- bounded, small scale entity
- defined characteristics (checklist)
- unchanging, in balanced equilibrium or self-reproducing
- underlying system of shared meanings: 'authentic culture'
- identical, homogenous individuals (p.8)

4.5 DEAF CULTURE CONTESTED

Contestation falls into three discourse categories. The first, 'semi-academic' discourses are found mainly in Deaf / professional periodicals, and the second primarily in the only printed academic debate so far. The third, subaltern contestation, has not yet been recorded.

1. Semi-academic Discourse

One of the most intriguing characteristics of Deaf cultural debate is the extent of the attack by colonialists and older Deaf elite sectors, who resist the idea of Deaf people having a culture of their own. Erickson (1992), for instance, states:

> Accurately defining deaf culture is as elusive as finding the source of the term ... nowhere is there an outline or a profile of what constitutes deaf culture, except the presence of sign language... None [of the authors] display more than an intuitive contention of its existence, much less a description of how we might recognise it. (p.48)

In making this assertion, however, he appears to overlook the views of a range of writers already cited. Stewart (1992) concurs that 'the term has yet to be satisfactorily defined' (p.130), but fails to demonstrate how this is the case. In a similar vein, Hurst (1992) asserts:

> In strict anthropological terms, 'Deaf Culture' is not a culture. It cannot marry people, it cannot bury people, and you cannot guarantee that your children will be members of it. It has no independent value system or religious system that answers the deeper questions of the meanings of life or death. It does not stand alone, complete, independent of other cultures. (Here it stands in parallel to 'women's culture', which is not a culture in the strictest sense either.) (p.1)

Hurst's critique raises useful ontological questions, but disregarding all other aspects of culture suggests a covert agenda. Her remarks occur in the context of debating whether the establishment of Deaf Studies courses is a desirable goal. She states:

> My objection to the term 'Deaf Culture' in this way is that it is isolationalist. It rejects the hearing world completely... Deaf people live and work as part of a larger world outside the deaf community. In sociological terms this is a subculture... I simply do not want to see academic validity given to a definition of the deaf community that serves a political or polemical purpose of rejecting the hearing world and hearing people and of rejecting any deaf people who do not agree with this isolated position. (p.2)

Since none of the texts cited earlier can be construed as rejecting the hearing world, her concerns (as a hearing person) indicate an agenda akin to the fears white people originally held regarding the establishing of Black Studies, or men towards Women's Studies, namely the fear of a minority group establishing its own identity in ways that might develop hostility to the majority.

A closer examination of Erikson (also hearing) reveals a similar fearfulness:

> The emergence of a deaf cultural elite [sic] has brought with it a rejection of all that is not deaf, or not deaf enough... The result is that deaf people are sometimes encouraged to reflexively reject the very support they need because the program is not for deaf only, or the provider is not deaf... A glaring example is the dogma that hearing people cannot understand deaf people because of the cultural differences; therefore hearing people cannot perform as therapists, teachers, leaders or models for the deaf. (p.49)

The last phrase is key - the fear that colonialist attitudes such as these will no longer be acceptable to Deaf people. Stewart's position is more explicitly stated. His article is essentially a polemic against:

> Arcane linguistic and cultural theories [that] are being promoted concerning 'the language of the deaf', 'the culture of the deaf', and 'the failure of deaf education', presented not as the pure speculations that they are, but as absolute facts. (p.129)

He criticises political correctness, and ideas that 'only black people know what is best for black people' (p.135), summarising:

> All in all, considering everything this country is doing for deaf people, anyone who says deaf people here are being oppressed ... needs serious attitude adjustment. Such an adjustment would occur instantly through a week's stay in some country like Iran or Cuba, where they would learn a new definition of 'oppression'. (p.136)

It is crucial for this study to note the wider political stance apparently implicit in resisting the Deaf cultural concept. Extrapolating from his argument, it is possible to argue that those who oppose Deaf culture do not think that Deaf people are oppressed, nor that Deaf education has failed, nor that Deaf people know what is best for their community. Many of those arguing against Deaf culture link this with a similar opposition to the emergence of the concept of ASL. Parsons, another opponent of ASL (1992, 1993) describes the linkage thus:

> First it was Ameslan, then ASL, then bi-lingual, and then bi-cultural until something more like a cult emerged... The movement accumulated strength and power as school after school and college after university classroom succumbed to ASL. (1992: 106)

At the time of publication there were only two Deaf schools in the USA which pursued bi-lingual / bi-cultural policies.

Parsons and Stewart were Gallaudet d/Deaf academics; thus if one is to understand the full parameters of this discourse, it is important to deconstruct their perspective. Stewart, deafened at 8 (therefore after acquiring English), asserts that it is 'our responsibility and our duty, to maintain as our first culture the American culture, and as our first language, the English language' (1993: 142). Parsons, partially deaf from birth, reminisces about her childhood thus:

> The word 'culture' was unheard of. We never considered ourselves minorities with our own cultures but instead as simply proud Americans. (1992: 103)

This perspective is linked with a distaste for 'the uneducated or low-verbal deaf who are content at not having to learn any more than the limited gestures they already have'

(1993: 126). She views with alarm the 'proponents [who] glorified the ASL of [such] grassroots deaf people' (1992: 106), contrasting it with her approval of an earlier era:

> Back then in 1915, Gallaudet students were predominently deafened adults or adventitiously deaf. They looked happy. They used classical American signs in English word order ... (*ibid*: 104)

Her advocacy of this elitist position is challenged by these recent developments:

> In a recent lecture on Deaf power, Barbara Kannapell, Gallaudet's 'consultant on Deaf culture', showed a chart illustrating that hereditary [ASL-using] deaf people are moving up to the top through English skills and leadership, with the adventitiously deaf moving down to the second level. (1993: 131)

It might therefore be argued that the covert agenda is fear of displacement and loss of power to the subaltern movement, a position similar to minority elites who identify primarily with the majority culture (Carter, 1991). However, where such 'Black conservatives' argue primarily against affirmative action and other political strategies originating *outside* the Black community, in the Deaf discourses, the arguments would seem to be aimed at its core, against their own subaltern language and culture itself. The English-orientation of such writers appears to confirm Chapter 2's concept of the language as a crucial demarcation.

A similar critique is found in Bertling's *A Child Sacrificed to the Deaf Culture* (1994). Deafened in childhood, Bertling's stated resentment at being placed in a Deaf school (by his Deaf mother) is constructed as an 'exposure' of Deaf culture; his account also expresses the negative attitudes to ASL found in Parsons and Stewart.

The above critiques are important in that in the current medical-cultural battleground, these dissenting views are given a prominent platform by those seeking to continue the oppression of Deaf people, a pattern paralleled with Black conservative co-option. Bertling became the first Deaf person to be invited to speak at an American Cochlea Implant conferences - as a representative of the Deaf community.

Thus it can be seen that for minority groups as a whole and Deaf culture in particular, community dissension is a volatile issue because it can be used by oppressors to maintain their practices. This is not the case for majority cultures, where dissension rarely threatens the cultural continuity.

A similar discourse exists in the UK, although the main objections come from those who are deafened, but not members of the Deaf community. James (1994) states:

> I also refute entirely the cultural aspect of deafness. It is a disability and a very severe and traumatic one at that - ask anyone who has lost their hearing. (p.9)

The inability to distinguish between Deaf and deafened people appears to be a consequence of internalising the medical model. Likewise, Craw (1993: 19) asserts: 'BSL has been portrayed as a cultural phenomenon. A disability in no manner can ever be considered a culture.'

Beneath these assertions appears to lies a similar fear; that BSL subalterns will supplant the English-oriented hard of hearing and deafened elite, as Craw makes explicit:

> BSL operates through a hierarchy which takes to personalized BSL mode [*sic*] at the expense of deaf people and other organisations. (p.18)

It is unfortunate that these are the only examples in print, for there is a growing trend of subaltern Deaf people justifying negative behaviour towards hearing people by claiming 'it's Deaf culture' (Turner, 1994a). To speak out against these examples is to be seen as anti-Deaf; there is at present no middle ground. This is mirrored in other minorities; the O.J. Simpson and Hill-Thomas issues similarly polarised Black debate (Chrisman and Allen, 1992; Morrison, 1992).

In summary, the dominant English discourse is led by those attempting to problematicise the concept of Deaf culture in order to resist the pro-subaltern changes of the last 15

years. Such highly charged debate makes it all the more important that definitions and frameworks for understanding Deaf culture be carefully developed.

2. Academic Critiques of Deaf Culture

Urion, a Native-Canadian professor of anthropology coming to the texts as a partial outsider, remarks:

> What I find in the literature about deaf culture is a restatement, and then a restatement, followed by a restatement, that there is a deaf culture. (1991: 13)

His main concern is that using culture as a conceptual base for liberation is dangerous because: (i) culture can never be described adequately; (ii) by so relying, group social activity can be constructed as static and boundary-oriented; (iii) it implies 'that deaf culture exists only as reactive to majority hearing culture' (p.12); and (iv) 'the most dangerous aspect is that becomes almost impossible to describe the relationship between the cultures we are comparing except in terms of dependency and conflict' (*ibid*). He describes the dangers thus:

> The concept of culture, as it has been used for research and policy discussion [about First Nation cultures] ... has proved to be divisive, to trivialise and to discredit our culture, and to provide a license for sterotyping. (p.5)

These are timely warnings. However, the need for academic precision need not imply a lack of awareness of the political implications of cultural self-examination, as Biko's Black Consciousness movement indicates (Pityana *et al*, 1991). Nevertheless these issues are central to the concerns addressed by Bourdieu in Chapter 3, and important for this study.

Similar concerns are presented in the only printed academic discussion on Deaf culture. Turner (1994a) begins with a comparable critique:

> We have a self-referential definition, therefore, which gets us nowhere, except into more vicious spiralling into infinity. (p.105)

His concern echoes those presented by Paulston in 3.7:

> From Padden's summary, one can again infer that her aim is largely political - to get the notion of Deaf people as constituting a human group, rather than as a bunch of tragic pathological cases, onto the agenda ... (p.107)

It is notable that only the subaltern activity is labelled as political - hegemonic politics appear to be read as the social norm and remain unanalysed. Turner also considers traditional definitions of culture to be inadequate:

> We get little snippets of nothing-very-substantial because the model encourages us to see a simple checklist of criteria rather than any kind of inter-related network of elements. The model points to a concern with particular aspects or items of culture, with what are often called cultural traits, rather than with the analysis of cultures or societies as systematic wholes. (p.110)

These concerns are valid and mirrored in the post-structuralist critiques in Chapter 3. However, the interpretive model of culture (as exemplified by Geertz in that chapter) is dismissed for its suggestion of the impossibility of describing cultures via participant observation: 'As soon as you reach in, any claim to objectivity is endangered, and so you're caught between a rock and a hard place' (p.109). This over-concern with 'classical' objectivity would particularly hinder subaltern reseach.

Nevertheless, he offers two useful alternative perspectives; the first positing that culture is 'not about states at all, but about processes' (p.112), citing Street's (1993) idea of culture as a verb, and Frake's (1980) conception of culture as a dynamic creation of readings by the individual: 'Culture does not provide a cognitive map, but rather a set of principles for map making and navigation'.

The second is the application of Gramsci's concept of hegemony to current definitions of

Deaf culture. Were it applied, Turner argues, a series of questions would emerge:

> By what process did [people] come to [their] conclusions? What information was made available ...? What information was not made available ...? Who set the terms for the debate ...? How were they able to do this? (p.115)

In summarising, he cites Cowan's conclusions on the inadequacy of existing models of culture:

> The concept of hegemony explicitly makes problematical the links between consciousness, sensory experience, and power in a way that the concepts of culture as a set of collectively shared symbols and meanings, does not. (p.116)

These points are valid and extremely important. However, the absence of Deaf cultural data from his critique means that it is not easy to see how his alternative approach might be constructed. It would appear also that the concept of hegemony has not been applied to his own position or to the terms of reference which established the debate in the first instance. In this respect, Bourdieu's strictures about the partially masked power and role of the academic / intellectual become particularly useful.

Stokoe responds to Turner's dissatisfaction with circular definitions of community and culture:

> The concept 'community' implies to a sociologist or demographer a countable population and a clear criteria for who is included and who is not, but knowledge does not come in integral packages and people behave in ways best described by fuzzy logic. An individual can be Deaf, American, Hispanic, an Elk, a Baptist etc all at the same time... Some aspect of culture is required to delimit a community, and to describe a culture requires finding a community whose culture it is [no matter how circular that might appear]. (1994c: 99)

Stokoe's use here of subjectivities is especially helpful. He also replies to Turner's concern to 'fit culture into some systems of knowledge', by pointing out that cultures are themselves an all-embracing system:

> The familiar Western cultures contain science as one subsystem; science in turn contains such different subsystems as the physical and social sciences. It is too much to ask that a subsystem of a subsystem of a culture be able to explain culture itself, a super-system of which it is entirely unaware of being a part. (p.100)

He also points up a key anthropological principle - the emic principle - to seek to represent the group studied in their own self-definitional terms. Thus if Deaf people say they have a culture, they are referring to a belief system which they hold, which is itself sufficient evidence for the existence of such a concept, no matter what the definitional limitations are. Speaking of the so-called 'Gallaudet Revolution' of 1988, and the statement made by one of its leaders to the TV cameras that 'the protestors would not be satisfied until they had a new president of the university who "knew and respected their language and culture"', Stokoe says:

> She was not reifying the terms ... but expressing the eminently reasonable demands that one who wields power in a community be fluent in that community's language and consequently aware of at least the general outlines of what members of that community express and think in that language - especially *its* values. (1994b: 267, italics in original)

3. Summary

The two discourses above contain either unacknowledged agendas, or do not appear to follow their concepts through. However it is necessary to devise a framework capable of refuting or accomodating the critiques offered - Turner's two suggestions above indicate that it is becoming increasingly clear that the post-modernist concepts in chapter 3 are especially relevant.

It is also clear that it is the responsibility of academia to elicit views about Deaf culture from Deaf people themselves. As Terstiep remarks: 'Since Deaf people have applied the term Deaf culture to themselves ... this term should be respected' (1993, p.233). However, it is clear that much work needs to be undertaken before we can reconcile subaltern definitions with the elite / academic discourses on Deaf culture. This

extensive work imposes its own limits on what can be achieved by this study.

4.6 RE-EVALUATING PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS OF DEAF CULTURE

Having now examined the discourses around culture and Deaf culture, we return to the problematic aspects of defining that culture from 2.2 to see what can be said about each.

1. Ethnicity Issues

Although the Deaf community did not appear to satisfy ethnicity conditions, there are other relevant characteristics. As Johnson and Erting (1989) point out: 'Many of the ... deaf children who are born to two deaf parents are born into a family with a history of deafness through several generations' (p.47). These lineages extend to as many as nine generations, that is, to the 1820s (which is usually the extent of written documentation). Furthermore, through a complex series of cross-marriages, a number of Deaf families have extended their kinship network to constitute wide-ranging and complex structures of consanguinity mirroring the kind of kinship structures associated with conventional ethnic groups. There is also ample documentation of the importance of these Deaf families in enculturating the other Deaf children (Johnson and Erting, *ibid*; Mason, 1991).

Although it would appear strange to claim that those growing up in hearing families do not 'belong' to their culture, there are additional characteristics which counterbalance this. One is the high rate of endogamous marriage. 90% of Deaf people who marry, marry another Deaf person. As Montgomery (1994) puts it:

> Deaf people have one of the highest intermarriage rates of all social groupings. Economic, racial, religious, class, political, and national boundaries are much more frequently crossed by intermarriage than the deaf / hearing divide. (p.260)

Linguistic criteria also offer a counterbalance. Since the child's first language is sign language, and since very few parents master it, the child clearly has a different set of

semantic structures and neurolinguistic patterning (Klima and Bellugi, 1979) from its parents. We also noted the tremendous cultural vacuum between a Deaf person and majority society in terms of access to the information and culture of that society. This leaves a space for Deaf people to experience their collective similarities and responses to it. As Erting and Johnson (*ibid*) put it: 'Proficiency in spoken English, or lack thereof, is the major factor defining an externally constituted boundary around deaf people as a socioeconomic group' (p.50). Written English augments this.

This is reinforced by Bahan and Nash's (1996) assessment of societies where most members used sign language in everyday life, even when there were no Deaf people present. There is little suggestion that Deaf people in those societies gather separately from the hearing people and produce their own culture. Thus a Deaf culture appears to require the presence of a *linguistic vacuum* in order to exist, and where it exists, appears to take precedence over traditional definitions of ethnicity.

2. Cultural Geography

As we have seen, Deaf communities do not generally choose to live in proximity. However, this is also true for other groups, including Jewish-Americans, and other former immigrant communities who initially lived together (as did Deaf children in Deaf schools), have subsequently dispersed, and yet continue to claim a common cultural identity. It is therefore unclear whether this criteria is a significant problematic in defining a culture. Indeed this may actually be a cultural *feature;* privacy in Deaf culture may simply be differently defined, weighted and manifested.

3. Material Constructions

The apparent lack of uniquely Deaf material constructions may actually lend credence to a different set of cultural theories. As Hall (1994) points out:

> While the Deaf share practically all non-language components of the dominant culture, *they have put their own stamp on everything*. Differences are a matter of shifting emphasis. (p.35, my italics)

This draws Deaf culture nearer to Bourdieu's emphasis on culture as disposition and offers the beginnings of a basis from which to investigate that cultural 'strategy'. Furthermore, similar critiques can be proferred for Jewish-Americans, Scottish and Welsh people etc, where distinctly different material constructions constitute a very small part of their total way of life, yet this does not threaten their cultural identity. It is difficult not to feel that cultural identity may be based more on the *idea of a shared past*. This in turn opens another window for frameworking Deaf culture.

4. Ontological Systems

Many cultural descriptions suggest that societies develop beliefs about their origins, their place in the larger scheme of things, and the cultural importance of birth and death. With regard to Deaf culture, this question can be re-formulated. Geertz (1973) suggests that culture consists of 'stories we tell to ourselves'. Quoting Jewish informants, Myerhoff (1980) suggests that alongside the Grand Narratives of Western thought, there are 'Little Traditions'; in essence folk renderings of the experiences of living, covertly held and transmitted. It cannot be ruled out that this may be the case for Deaf communities.

Gannon (1981), Padden and Humphries (1988), Rutherford (1993) and Carmel (1987) all give examples of Deaf stories and folklore, while Moore and Levitan (1992) are more explicit:

> In the negative interpretation [of Deaf existence], a soul is born as a deaf person as a punishment - ie bad karma. But according to the positive interpretation, a soul chooses to be born as a deaf person as a challenge or learning experience. The Deaf soul experiences the restrictions, prejudices, and hostility of the hearing world so that it may progress to a higher level of spiritual understanding. (p.160)

This is not necessarily typical of Deaf people's spiritual beliefs, but the example has significance for being presented as part of a textbook ('For Hearing People Only'), seeking to explain all things Deaf to outsiders.

Ontologies are not only 'stories we tell to ourselves', but stories which we desire to pass on to our children, and it is they who embellish them as part of the folk-process, similar to the pidgin > creole linguistic process. Conversely, a culture impeded from passing on its beliefs, as in First Nation cultures, 'dies', or more precisely, becomes something else, usually a version of the majority culture. True genocide being extremely rare, it is usually cultural ethnocide, via enforced schooling in majority culture language and values, which achieves this end. This is a strategy strikingly similar to Oralism.

Therefore, given Deaf ethnicity issues, one would look to the Deaf schools pre-Milan as the source for actualising any Deaf ontologies. If this is correct, then one would expect, in the present era where Deaf people are regaining some responsibility for 'their' children, re-emergence of this actualisation.

Indeed, this is what seems to be happening. For the last 15 years, as soon as they were allowed back into the school systems, Deaf people have been creating and videotaping stories for Deaf children. The significance of this is that it has not resulted from conscious policy-making, but from some other impulse. Examples of such work, which go beyond simple storytelling to develop Deaf-centred folktales and mythologies, are numerous, and include Bahan (1992), Supalla (1992) and Katz (1994) in the USA, Miles (1983), Daunt and Hanafin (1995) in the UK.

The 19th century Paris Banquets have already given examples of a larger Deaf self-concept. Mottez notes that:

> The bust of the abbe de l'Epee ... sat like an altar at the centre of the U-shaped table... The Deaf Mutes called him *our spiritual father, our messiah, our saviour, our redeemer...* It meant the begetter *(geniteur)*, the original parent: 'He who led us from night once and for all. Now it is up to us! (ref. p.151; italics in original)

Padden and Humphries (1988) also note this religious construction of the 'Deaf beginning', and give numerous other examples of the concept of moving from darkness to light, that is, from being lost in the world to finding one's people and one's home in

the Deaf community. Images of darkness and light are of especial resonance to those who use visual languages (cf the 'lampost' trope; Daunt, 1995), described further on page 158. Other tropes, such as 'home' and 'family' are widely used (Kyle and Woll, 1985; Lane *et al*, 1996).

One would therefore expect that as Deaf people gain more influence over the upbringing of Deaf children, these beliefs will become more conscious and later ritualized. Unfortunately, it is too early in the process to be developed for this study.

Christianity may be another ontological source. Much of the Deaf spiritual impulse may have been sublimated into Christian constructions, but Levine's (1977) account of African-American adaptation of these to their own covert agendas suggest that Deaf dispositions may follow this pattern. One such thread is expressed by Baillie (1998) as 'We thank God for the gift of our sign language'; this may well have been a central belief in earlier Deaf societies.

5. Identity as Cultural Choice

Adoption of Deaf identity as a conscious choice is commonly represented in the literature describing isolated mainstreamed Deaf adolescents' journey towards the Deaf community (Ladd, 1979; Lawson, 1981; Robinson, 1995; Dodds, 1998, *inter alia*). These make it clear that there is a major impulse towards actualising a Deaf identity based on joining a cultural group.

6. Cultural Boundaries and Bi-culturality

Bienvenu and Colomnos (1989) list six features of American culture as shared values between Deaf and hearing peoples. These are 'freedom', patriotism, materialism, the importance of the family (for Deaf of Deaf parents - they consider that Deaf of hearing parents value Deaf community life above family life), the English language, and the importance of education.

Kannapell (1989) constructs a similar list. Under 'shared values', she cites 'democracy', 'holidays', materialism, food and clothes. However, she takes the analysis further by developing a category of 'shared but different values', which include 'children', 'education', employment, language, and 'communication', where her intention is to highlight cultural 'meta-categories' which Deaf culture adapts to its own purposes. Under a further heading, 'different values', she contrasts some Deaf and majority culture values. These include (ordered respectively) 'community versus individualism', 'visual beauty vs music', Deaf schools vs public schools, and 'eyes and hands vs ears'. She also develops an technique for analysing different degrees of cultural influences. Unfortunately, this is used as a workshop exercise, and thus no further data is available.

These strategies are important in beginning to assert and unpick Deaf bi-culturality.

7. Summary

All the above characteristics posed problems for definitions either of Deaf culture or for culture in general. The account above suggest that the problems lie with the latter and thus highlight a need to re-think present academic definitions.

4.7 SUMMARISING THE REVIEW

This section summarises the strands emerging from the discourses reviewed in Chapters 1 to 3, and re-assesses them to indicate the direction of this study and the methodologies adopted in the next chapter.

Weaknesses in present Deaf cultural analysis include the assumption that Deaf culture is a universal concept, rather than nation-specific, and the absence of a historical dimension and therefore a theory of cultural change. The virtual absence of distinctions of class, race, gender, age and sexual orientation is also important. Likewise the use of taxonomic rather than processual models, and the tendency towards prescriptivism rather than dispositional accounting, limits what can be understood.

1. Cultural Discourses and their Relevance to this Study

Although the review assessed the relevance of each set of theories to the Deaf situation, I summarise them below to illustrate the strategies which might be implied for this study.

Within anthropology, both adaptational and ideational frameworks have relevance to Deaf culture. Similarly, theories of cultural competence and performance are extremely useful, as is Bohannen's conceptualisation of cultural change, traps and dissonance, as well as the importance of futurology.

Within Cultural Studies, the necessity of 'surrendering to the text', the importance of the researcher's role in creating political change by giving voice to the subaltern, and the assertion of the creativeness of everyday subaltern life are important principles for the study. Theories of ideology and hegemony are also relevant in constructing Deaf communities as oppositional cultures.

From cross-disciplinary and post-modernism, theories of multiple subjectivities are useful, as are ideas formed around essentialism and diasporic concepts. Bourdieu's explications of social and cultural capital, of indeterminacy and dispositions, of fields, agents and habitus, and of structured reflexivity are of particular importance. To these can be added various other strands which emerge from minority studies, post-colonial studies, ethnicity and bi-cultural studies.

2. Review Conclusions

This array of epistemologies, theories and insights can appear bewildering. However, from the perspective of this initiatory study of Deaf culture, several conclusions can be reached.

Since we know so little about Deaf culture, it would be highly premature to impose any

overarching theories. Likewise, these theories being conceived outside the culture, to impose any would continue the epistemic violence already visited upon it. Culture remaining among the most contentious of academic issues, it would be extremely unwise to attempt a resolution of cultural theory within a rarely explored field. Since the special nature of the subaltern-researcher is from being far from understood or even conceptualised, adopting any one theory would be premature. These being the case, there is no evidence in the literature review that any one cultural theory has an a priori basis for validity.

4.8 THEORETICAL GROUNDING FOR THIS STUDY

The reservations above mean that an eclectic mixture of tools ('bricolage') must be utilised. However, the study cannot proceed without an overarching theoretical grounding. The one I have selected takes as its starting point Keesing's assertion that cultural grammars are:

> impossible to achieve in the face of the vast intricacy of what humans know about their world - the subtle shadings of understanding and mood and meaning that defy representation in formal algorithms. (1981: 92)

In respect of the Deaf culture discourse itself, Stokoe's prioritisation of 'description' is also useful:

> Cultures can be defined and explained only after they have been described with some semblance of accuracy and completeness. Description of Deaf culture is far from complete, and confusion of logical types will not improve its accuracy. (1994c: 100)

Geertz (1983) indicates useful sources of strategies:

> trying to understand insurrections, hospitals, or why it is that jokes are prized, have turned to linguistics, aesthetics, cultural history, law, or literary criticism for illumination rather than, as they used to do, to mechanics or physiology. (p.8)

Similarly, feminists have focused on a re-centering of fieldwork, where reflexivity and emotionality are perceived as valuable and admissable sources of data (Hochschild, 1976; Coates, 1996).

A concept from Cultural Studies, elaborated in 4.4, can be related to this. Williams (1975: 64) suggests that the researcher attempt to locate the 'structure of feeling', whether of a text, a group, or a cultural process. This can be explicated as emphasising the task of identifying thought and feeling from introspection, and searching for a language in which to describe both the 'object' under study and the researcher's response to them. Such a language, it is suggested, strives both to capture the 'essence' of the object and to simultaneously represent it to others.

Although this can be subjected to criticisms of essentialism, Geertz (who seems not to be familiar with Williams' work, or indeed vice versa), asserts two ideas which can be used to reinforce this perspective. The first concerns the basic nature of anthropology, and indeed of ethnography:

> That [which] we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what [the group under study] and their compatriots are really up to. (1973: 9)

Geertz argues that therefore all such work can aspire to is an interpretation of cultures, which can only be 'measured' against each other by non-scientific criteria, although, not wishing to submit to complete relativism, he gives suggestions for assessing the value of different texts.

This perspective is extended into his later concept of 'local knowledge' (1983), which asserts both the singularity of the culture under study, and the extent to which the language used to describe that culture is compelled to become culture-specific in order to render the fullest description of the event, ritual or custom studied, a description which has to take in 'whatever is insinuated as background information before the thing itself is directly examined' (1973: 9). This can be construed as the historical perspective of the group under study, as rendered by them, and as perceived and interpreted by the

subaltern-researcher. His approach has been termed 'thick description' and is thought to highlight the following qualities:

> What generality it contrives to achieve grows out of the delicacy of its distinctions, not the sweep of its abstractions. (1973: 25)

Therefore, a primary goal of this theoretical approach is described thus:

> The essential vocation of interpretative anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record that man [sic] has said. (p.30)

Geertz sees the development of such approaches as ones which are steadily growing within the social sciences:

> It has thus dawned on social scientists that they did not need to be mimic physicists or closet humanists or to invent some new realm of being to serve as the object of their investigations. Instead, they could proceed with their vocation, trying to discover order in collective life, and *decide how what they were doing was connected to related enterprises when they managed to get some of it done.* (1983: 21, my italics)

Although Geertz' practices have been criticised from several perspectives, including issues concerning the accessibility to the subaltern of the language used to represent such 'local knowledge' (Clifford and Marcus, 1998), this theoretical approach appears the most realistic one for the present study to adopt.

4.8.1 Implications for this Study

To this theoretical grounding can can be added several key epistemological and methodological principles and strategies which can be utilised from the various disciplines which have placed culture under study. These can be summarised as follows.

The maximally useful way to research Deaf culture at this point in time is to utilise bricolage, including methodologies which affirm introspection as a member of that culture to intuit the direction which the research should take, what should be observed, who should be questioned, and what they should be questioned about. It could be argued that this results in similar methodologies which 'outside' ethnographers generally adopt (Spradley, 1980), but such questions can only be resolved by examining the resulting 'insider' texts and comparing them with the existing outsider texts (cf Lincoln and Gabba, 1985).

In order to transcend the academic problematics described earlier, transparency must continually be utilised, and in so doing, the research must attempt to incorporate Bourdieu's (1992) strictures that the influences of individual fields are also made transparent.

In examining, drawing out, selecting and describing aspects of Deaf 'local knowledge', the concept of the 'structure of feeling' must be placed in a dialectical relationship. Thus observations on Deaf cultural manifestations or statements made by interviewees have to be situated alongside this subaltern-elite researcher's own introspected interpretation of what is meant by such manifestations or statements, and the process rendered as transparently as possible. This must be carried out using language which attempts to capture the flavour of what is understood within the examples given.

Although it must be noted that despite the reservations concerning the success, or even desirability at establishing a conceptual framework at this point in time, the strategies above do contain the possibility of developing concluding hypotheses which may contain or suggest maximal generalisability power in the Chomskian sense.

With these principles in mind, the study now proceeds to explicate aspects of Deaf culture as gleaned from informants and participant-observation. The focus in the first instance is on Deaf schools as one of the two traditional originating sites of Deaf culture.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROOTS OF DEAF CULTURE

Part One

Residential Schools

This chapter investigates the first traditional cultural site, the Deaf residential school experience. Two fundamental dynamics are identified; the negative effects of oralist colonialism on the culture, and the second the positive *collective* responses of Deaf children to that oppression. The interplay between these dynamics informs and expands our understanding of the 'deafness-Deafhood' axis within the culture.

5.1 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEAF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Chapter 1 described the importance of Deaf schools - the domain where the community language was learned, overtly at first, and covertly after Oralism; where manifold aspects of socialization into Deaf experience occurred; and (again prior to Oralism), where instruction in how to conduct onesself in an alien majority society was provided by the Deaf teachers and adults who worked in the schools.

Most of the data here is given by people recalling the period from 1945 to 1960. The negative experiences were triangulated with other accounts of the Deaf school experience under Oralism, and found to be congruent. Many of the dynamics may well apply also to the period from 1880 to 1945. The data revealing positive and collective Deaf experiences and actions has rarely been described in the literature - this chapter brings aspects of these to the forefront, many for the first time.

1. Community and Identity

Peggy, from the North-West and in her early fifties, left the Deaf community for twenty

years and then returned. She was thus in a good position to summarise the importance of the school experience to Deaf identity and culture:

> When you're out of Deaf life, no matter how much you deny it, there's something missing inside of you. The same for those I see who've come from hearing [mainstreamed] schools, when they watch us talk about residential days... When out for a long time, then back, it's really hit me that I have that identity and community deep inside, and know who I am. Deaf, that's fine.

Other informants also indicated the importance of identity and community formed and developed in the schools.

2. Resistance to Hearing Influence

Emma, from a London Deaf family, summarised the difference between those who attended residential schools and others, when talking of her parents, who both completed their schooling before the war:

> Both my parents are from hearing families - father stayed at home and grew up very oral, Mother went to Deaf school at 4 and stayed there almost all the year. I used to watch their arguments when I was little. She's more like 'Don't hearing tell me what to do!', and he's like 'Respect the hearing'.

This example suggests that being in close contact with one's parents, (whether or not one could communicate with them), meant that one was more likely to develop a deferential relationship with hearing people generally, whilst if one's Deaf peers formed the primary relationship in life, then one might be more able to stand up for one's Deaf rights in later life.

3. School as Primary Family

Deaf primary relationships were akin to, or even replaced, the birth family relationship. Several informants used the image of 'family' to describe their school situation, mostly memorably, 'a family of brothers and sisters moving onwards and upwards', and several

referred to the reluctance of Deaf children to go 'home' at weekends and holidays. As Ray Lee, in his late forties and from the North-East put it:

> Pupils ... who travelled home everyday really wanted to stay at the school ... and inside they were really resentful. When they came back next morning they were frantically signing away to make up for lost time!

Peggy concurred:

> Home was all right, but boring. I was excited to get back to school. And as for holiday times, it was like, 'Oh nooo!'

This sadness or even fear of school holidays marks a significant difference between Deaf and hearing childhood experience. A further difference is that Deaf children only experienced the place in which they were 'normal' as a 'working' time - having holidays and relaxing time out of school together occured so rarely as to be almost non-existent. This domain of normality was also marked by the everyday experience of 'failure' in the standards set by Oralism. All these differences have left their imprints on the culture.

Several informants emphasised that in past times Deaf children went home much less often, and for shorter periods of time than nowadays, so there was much more time to build on their own group experiences. Others gave descriptions of all the activities which took place after lessons finished, none of which they could have such easy access to if they had been at home.

4. 'A Normal Community Life'

Ray continually stressed that the residential school experience not only established Deaf identity and community, but also built one's character as an individual, and helped one become independent and self reliant. He also gave a moving in-depth description of one aspect of that experience:

> It's especially important for the stages of life, up through your childhood. For the very youngest children, at such a young age, when

> they might be psychologically nervous / uncertain about being Deaf, to see other children like themselves helps them to feel good about themselves. They start to *realise that they are kin*... That's the start of communication, the start of friendships.

He then identified the next stages:

> Then you can look up towards the next oldest group. 'Ooh, they play football, they play tennis, oh, me will same when older. They talk together differently', (maybe psychologically a bit higher up), 'I will same too'... Then the next stage, intermediate, there's the bigger boys, strong and sturdy, who protect us. We'll be like them... Then up again, there's the senior boys. 'Oooh! Men!'

Interestingly, this account is told from the perspective of the smallest children, giving emphasis to the idea of one's future identities manifesting themselves before their young eyes. He continued:

> When they themselves move up, the older boys they saw before - they've gone. Where? Then sports day, in the old boys' football match, ahhh, there they are! Life outside! 'You been where?' 'Me work.' 'Work - oh, what's that? Where?' and so on.

Finally he gives an eloquent summary of the entire process:

> And so round and round it goes, in an ever-ascending spiral of knowledge and development; you grow in confidence and you know where you will be going. It's important! On this journey, you have to accept language development, community development, and cultural inheritance. They develop themselves, yes, but they inherit it too. And they become part of the larger Deaf whole as the cycle moves on. So, through this, *Deaf people have the knowledge that everything IS normal - to them!* [peaceful contented smile].

Of course, this is the last place where they are able to feel 'normal', before leaving for a life of 'permanent exile' in another world. This assertion of normality is crucial. The experience which Ray describes resembles that of a 'normal' hearing childhood. That such a 'normal' life experience *cannot be found outside the residential environment* informs Deaf perceptions of the school experience.

5. 'First Contact'

The delight described above was felt by several informants when they entered school, once their first traumas of leaving home were overcome. As Olivia, a North-West Deaf woman in her mid twenties put it:

> When me small, me believed I was the only Deaf person in the world. Then I went to Deaf school, and found I could gesture to them and be understood, and that was it right away - I loved it!

Another from the South, Ursula, said:

> I started to sign outside in the playground - 'shh! be careful' - it was sooo easy to take in - I went round with my mouth wide open! I loved to sign so much, me and the others, we were the same, so I would copy, copy, and improve my signing.

This thirst for one's own language was widely reported. Ray's experience was slightly different:

> I saw all these hands waving around; I was awestruck and froze to the spot. I remember that - I was four and a half, five, and a kid came up and signed to me, and I shrank back... Yet I identified myself with him like that <snaps fingers>. Yep, that moment *opened me to the world, really.*

Once again, there is nothing ostensibly abnormal about these experiences. But of course, many of these Deaf children had waited for at least 5 years before being able to begin a 'normal' interaction and relationships with other human beings. It is hard for a lay person to grasp the enormity of the situation obtaining under Oralism which has resulted in a linguistic (and to an as-yet unresearched degree, emotional) orphaning of the Deaf child. However, this can also happen in situations where the parents do sign, since to understand this Deaf need for one's own peer group is to begin to understand the importance of the residential school in Deaf culture.

There is however, another kind of first contact, however, as Harry, in his fifties from the North-West, describes:

> Me 3 when first arrived at school - remember, wow, vividly the nuns' huge headpieces [acts this all out with great detail and power] ... couldn't sign or talk ... when they strapped these huge hearing aids on me, and me trying to figure out what was happening, what they were for ... slowly worked it out - mean I can't talk, can't hear with this thing, *means I'm deaf*!

This is a difficult passage to transcribe as it was rendered so intensely. In essence it contrasts with the peer group experiences above. Those contacts resembled normality, Deafhood, whereas the classroom experience saw one absorb the deafness label representing abnormality. The battles which took place between these two readings informs the rest of the chapter.

6. A National Identity

The residential school was also important because of the regional and national catchment system which many used. These suggest a cultural awareness of a Deaf nationhood. Ken, in his fifties from the North West explained:

> We would get out a map of the UK, and work out where everybody came from. At the end of it, you'd have dots for Deaf kids from Land's End to John O'Groats! We used to say 'We cover the whole country, mate - *we have a Deaf country of our own!'*

Ray added:

> Our community *is* the whole island, the whole UK. Whereas with mainstreaming, where are you? Just a tiny dot within another tiny dot! No thanks - my community is from Liverpool to Aberdeen down to Brighton to Torquay!

These accounts might surprise the outsider given the negative experiences of Oral schooling; however the extent of positive Deaf responses on the subjects above

confirms what the informants say. Indeed, the extent to which the experience of being together outweighed such negativity indicates the importance of more research into this core of Deaf life, especially since it is a major problem for Deaf communities that these perspectives are literally in-credible to those in power, and to parents.

Many day pupils or those from day schools may have had somewhat different experiences. They too loved to be with their fellow Deaf, but not having the opportunity to participate in the intense post-school activities, meant that they had many hours less, and cumulatively many years less socialisation, less world and Deafworld-knowledge, and less chance to develop their full identity. In effect, they experienced the negatives of this chapter with fewer of the positives.

5.2 LIFE UNDER ORALISM

Almost all the informants talked extensively of their experiences under Oralism - the ten-to-fifteen years of ritualised humiliation which constituted their education, which seem to have applied for most of this century. Records of these already exist, so only a few examples are given here in order to establish the background against which to understand the significance of the Deaf cultural responses.

Harry gave another vivid description, this time of the nuns in full flight:

> They would come striding towards you, walking right at us, forcing us to stumble backwards, mouthing out words, spitting as they did so - afterwards you could be full wet, but never knew what they said! Poking you, twisting your ear, sometimes you didn't even know what you supposed to have done.

The images of yawning mouths and wagging fingers were widely used. In working out what infringements had been committed, one of these was of course very clear - signing. Gwen from the South-West, in her mid-twenties with a Deaf mother described her first moments in the Oral classroom:

> Teacher said, 'name? where from?' all in speech. Came to me, I fingerspelt my name ... oh oh - Boom! Teacher picked me right up off

> the ground, held me dangling in front of the class and said 'What's that? That's a monkey!' The rest of the class just sat there trembling.

We will see later what effect equating those who signed with animals had on those who internalised such imagery. Punishment for signing was usually more ritualized, and several informants described a kaleidoscope of such rituals. Peggy mentioned having to go without meals, whilst Ursula talked of a speech marks system, where those with the least marks (ie the most Deaf) were also punished at the end of the week. At Ken's school, the children were encouraged to inform on each other if they saw anyone signing. Harry's summary of punishments was the most concise:

> Cane on hand, buttocks, flick-of-wrist smack on hams ... sent to 'prison', dunce cap, not allowed out, loss of privileges. Lots more really.

As if these were not enough, he went on:

> But you should ask the older folks; it was even worse for them, even crueller.

For Norma, from the Midlands in her mid fifties, the 'prison' was the coal cellar. Several informants also gave vivid accounts of the difficulties of trying not to sign, which were simultaneously amusing and sad. Other accounts were simply sad - each person described other children who were too Deaf to begin to comprehend what they were supposed to do, and the extent to which they were consequently victimised by teachers.

The actual 'educational' experience was described in similar terms by many; they spoke of the intense efforts of trying to lipread or make sense of what was happening, of trying to bluff, of giving up and letting it all sail past them, and of copying from the board. Harry described the latter:

> They'd write on the board, and we would copy it. Then they would give you good marks and you would swagger about. But what did those words mean? Ha! Nothing! It all went past us... Yet those two-faced

people would give us good marks and pat us on the head.

Even those deemed successful at school described the process as an intense struggle. A number found their speech praised, yet on reaching the outside world endured the humiliation of finding their teachers had been lying to them. This realisation shattered the self-image they had built up to protect them through their school years - suddenly they were not who they thought they were.

Life under Oralism varied, of course. Some schools would turn a blind eye to signing outside the classroom, whilst some pursued it relentlessly. However, the accounts given above can safely be taken as the norm from which variations can be measured.

5.3 CREATING A POSITIVE DEAF EXPERIENCE

What follows has rarely been recorded, yet is fundamental to an understanding of how such intense oppression can be regarded as a domain of equally intense pleasure and cultural development for so many. This section focuses on the collectivity and unity which stands at its core.

1. The Joy of Signing

Almost all the informants described situations and strategies that they devised so that they could communicate with each other. Harry summarised their experiences:

> We'd get together in the playground, stand in a circle or an oval, so the teachers couldn't see in, and sign away to each other. To tell stories, we'd hide, round corners, in the toilets, wherever. Or go downstairs, and one would keep their foot by the door so when somebody came by, they would feel that person's vibrations, and tell us, so we'd all put our hands down sharpish.

Another famous signing domain was the dormitories. Ralph, in his thirties from the South, described how they got round the problem of lighting:

> I liked playing with electrical things, so I rigged up this device; when

> the dorm door was closed, the lights came on, and when it opened, they went off. And it worked fine for a long time, but one night, the teacher left and the door went shut and then opened slightly, so of course the lights went on and then off again! They took a closer look, and then of course that was the end of that!

To the outside, such escapades conjur up the image of prison camps, yet none of the Deaf informants expressed that connection, so normal did it all seem to them; if the parallel seems exaggerated, many other examples confirm it in the extreme degree to which the farce was sometimes carried. Harry explained:

> Even when the lights were out, we'd be lying in bed trying to sign to each other. But we knew the teachers would be watching us through a sliding panel. So we'd try and sign without moving! [gives demonstration] But Deaf would be given away 'cos their feet were moving. Yes, really!

Many accounts stressed the pleasure gained from their fight against the odds, a fight which existed for every minute of every waking day for ten to fifteen years. It is certainly undeniable that the joy of communication must have been the greater for never being taken for granted.

It can also be argued that a '1001 Victories' concept, described more fully in the next chapter, originated in the Deaf school under Oralism, since, as the accounts above suggest, each getting together and communicating was a significant 'little' victory. The remainder of the chapter should be read with that concept in mind.

2. Storytelling

Storytelling was the most common positive theme. Stefan from London and in his fifties, even linked this to Nature:

> My bed was next to the window, so that gave me authority over the curtains. Now my [Deaf] sis always signed me bedtime stories. So when people wanted stories, I'd open the curtains and sign some. But of course there wasn't always enough moonlight. So what it came to was that when the moon was full, we could have plenty of stories, that one

> period of the month... Then someone had a brilliant idea - if moon was there but cloudy, then we'd add a torch!

His roommates used a voluntary rotation system for storytelling, as did Norma, Peggy and Harry. The topics of the stories varied widely and were drawn from book-based accounts, (ghost stories, fairy stories adventure stories), or film and TV based accounts, freely adapted. Ray described how he would use famous names, and then make up stories for them. Another important aspect of the Deaf experience was passing down tales of pupils long since departed. Ray gave an amusing account of one who had developed a particularly skilful way of stealing bikes from shops. Harry's account was the most instructive, as befits his 'master storyteller' status in the community:

> My influence, [Jack D] ... when I was small, I'd see a group of Deaf, about 13/14 years old, signing, and him signing beautifully with them... I crawled my way between all the legs to the front. They told me to go away - it wasn't suitable for small children. But I wouldn't give up.

He went on to describe how he set himself to learn from the best signing models around him, and how that resulted in his present-day prominence. However, like the others, he stressed that there was great equality of opportunity; everyone's contribution was valued:

> Those kids who were rich would go home to families, go to see movies. We nothing home - from poor families, so when they came back they all had stories for us. We'd beg them to go to the pictures so that they could get some more stories!

One of the additional creative factors in this experience was that the children, obviously unable to hear the film dialogue, superimposed their own plot theories onto the original. This seemed well understood, and added to the pleasure obtained from such stories.

The extent to which a good signer-storyteller was given higher status was implied in several accounts. Peggy presented one example:

> We'd get in a circle for storytelling; one or two we didn't want in, slow learners, would refuse. But one girl ... she was brilliant. We'd all lap it

> up, mouths wide open in sheer rapture; you could believe these stories, the way they were told... If people saw her in conversation with someone else, *they would just gravitate towards her* ... knowing the story wouldn't be planned, it would just happen.

The suggestion from several informants was that although the groups would accept stories from anyone, no matter what their signing style, the best storytellers used 'beautiful' BSL. To be capable of that meant one inevitably experienced more clashes with the teachers. Thus those more compliant and academically successful (mostly with more hearing), were set in opposition to those who were popular counter-leaders of a different ethos.

3. Teaching Each Other

The importance of storytelling in Deaf culture should not be understood as simply a form of escapism. The thirst for information is a major theme in a culture not only denied access to broadcast media and public communication through ignorance, but, because of the additional oralist restrictions, exclusion from parental and educational information. To complete an almost total isolation from majority culture, access to written information was also thus seriously hampered.

Therefore, given the Deaf cultural tendency to render almost everything in story form, the children's storytelling would also include whatever practical information they could pick up from 'outside', by their reading of adult actions, or from the Deafworld outside.

Within the classroom it was almost universally reported that each assisted the others to try to understand both what the teachers said, and what they meant by what was said. This was undoubtedly a core of what became a culture of collectivism, especially in view of the dangers involved in slipping signed explanations in when the teachers' backs were turned. Ray summarised the totality of this information exchange thus:

> My mother, bless her ... three years before she died we had a helluva row... She said 'They told me I must never sign to you, and they were right'. 'Whaat! They were right?! How?' 'Yes look at you - you got a good education'. Oh God! <buries head in hands> 'You think I got a

> good education simply by you not signing to me?! If I hadn't signed with the Deaf, I wouldn't have got an education at all!!

Others agreed; thus all these themes are fruitful sites for further research.

4. The Importance of Humour

Perhaps unsurprisingly in such adverse situations, humour also came to play a major part in surviving the oralist experience. Peggy gave the most eloquent example:

> One boy, his skill was humour ... one look at him and you were finished ... if people were sad or depressed, or something had gone wrong at school, or got broken, or if we were all being punished for something, or if the head had to be called in, he'd have something to lift us... Gave us strength to carry on, you see. That was our strength, having that humour. Something that could keep us together, block out those trying to crush us; they weren't allowed into that place that we had. And it [confirmed] yes, *we really had something of worth ourselves.*

Most other examples of humour given were either incidental, or implicit in the accounts given, but reinforced Peggy's description. It may be the case, therefore, that the high degree of teasing and humour that has frequently been remarked on by visitors to Deaf culture, originated at school.

5. Resistance and Leadership

Most informants brought up this subject; the examples given appeared to fall into several categories. One of course is the mode of continual rebellion which occurred every time someone raised their hands to sign. Another, given by Norma, cogently illustrates one set of dynamics:

> We didn't have any leaders as such. The kids followed the naughty ones. That was all based round storytelling too. They'd be put in the coal cellar for one or two hours... Kids would gather round, feeling for them, Deaf stuck there in the dark. When out, 'Oh I'm alright'. 'What happened in there?' They'd make up stories about what happened. The story was the key - it'd be like 'Oh I burrowed through the coal and saw this secret world', or 'I found some matches and saw ...', or 'saw a

> mouse', or whatever. They'd become heroes to us ... so they'd become leader for 2/3 days, till we got fed up, or found another leader when someone else did something naughty.

Norma goes on to say that most punishments were for signing. What is interesting about this account is that it stresses the egalitarian nature of their society; anyone could become a leader - *provided that they endured the punishment that went with it*. This process was taken a step further:

> Sometimes a topic would become 'talk of the week'. How did it become that? Kids would ask that person questions over and over, and they would keep building and exaggerating the story to keep attention. So if they became good at storytelling, they could prolong their leadership. Didn't matter if it was all exaggerated, or even made up - that was part of the rituals. Then of course if the teachers saw us around them, we would all get punished, and so it would keep going, round and round.

Another form of rebellion was to run away, as Stefan recounted. Others included a process of continual rebellion, couched in skirting the borders of insolence. Bonnie stressed that 'they couldn't keep us down - in any class there'd be ten or more of us and only one of them, and they probably knew deep down what we thought of them'. Another set of responses can be paralleled with the small sabotages carried out by assembly line workers or plantation slaves - playing dumb at carrying out instructions. Ray gave one example:

> Those trainee teachers on Ewing's course - in their second year they sent them out to Deaf schools... One took a shine to me, maybe because she thought she could sail through her qualification with me... So when the exam day came, and the hierarchy of Manchester came to test her ... she asked me, 'Ray, what is an intransitive verb?' 'I don't know', I said. She went bright red. 'I've told you only last week'. [turns to his classmates] 'She didn't, did she?' 'Yes she did'. 'Nooo, she couldn't have'. 'Yes she did'. 'Funny I can't recall it'.

As the story goes on, he is sent to the head, and told to go back and apologise:

> 'Mr Green told me that I had to apologise to you', meaning 'I don't apologise, understand?' ... 'Mr Green told me to tell you that I have been taught about intransitive verbs'... As we were leaving the class, I

> said to the examiner, 'I never understood half of what she said... That's the kind of teacher you are dumping on the valuable education of Deaf children'. I got whapped six of the best for that!

This example points up once again the significant difference between rebellions of these kinds in Deaf and hearing schools. It is difficult to imagine a situation in the latter which could carry the in-depth cultural resonances exemplified here.

Another kind of rebellion was to commit occasional outrages. Ray elaborated:

> I remember when we formed the Church Of Killers. We were fed up with the headmaster's cat being left in our charge and messing all over the place. If you kicked the damn thing, you got caned for that ... so one day I formed the Church to get rid of the cat [goes on to explain how it was done].

In this and other examples, it is hard to prove a direct link to resistance to Oralism, and it can be argued that these were typical 'schoolboy pranks'. Nevertheless, because resisting Oralism overshadowed all that happened, such actions undoubtedly fed into the general pool of rebellion.

Hearing aids of course were a prime symbol of Oralism around which to rebel. Damage to or losing of hearing aids, switching them off until caught out by the teacher (they were made to wear them with the controls externally visible), were primary strategies. Dorothy described her school's equivalent:

> We would throw them into this huge thorn bush, and then pretend we'd lost them. Of course after a while, they caught on, and every so often a teacher would cut their way into the bush and pull a few out. But we were smaller, so we got to be able to put them beyond their reach. God knows how many rusty aids will be in there when they finally cut it down!

Such rebellion climaxes in Ray's highly symbolic example. It is the final day of school, and the pupils and some of the teachers have walked to the station to take their final train journey of school life:

'Right, I'm leaving now. I've got everything, but I must leave behind my bitter enemy', and I took off the hearing aid ... tied it up with its own wire, dropped down to the railway line and taped it tightly to the track ... the teacher started blowing his top and saying 'It's Government property, bring that back!'... And then the train went over it and it just splintered into tiny fragments. 'Hooray, it's died!' ... 'I'll report you to the headmaster', he fumed. 'Go ahead', I said. 'Because I am going in *this* direction, and you are going *that* way!'

The story continues as the pupils mount the train, and most of the rest of the group (8 or 9), tie up their aids and fling them out of the window as the train pulls out, people ducking hastily as the aids flew around them:

> And we never wore hearing aids again! There was a voice screaming in my mind - Freeeeeedommmm! Phew! All those years of noise pounding away at the side of my brain ...!

Of course, such gestures could only be made at the end of one's school life, but the intensity expressed in this last example gives an indication of the levels of stress behind this physical imposition.

6. The 'Deaf Mentality'

Ray summarised the basis of resistance in his account of the 'Deaf Mentality', which demands an in-depth rendering:

> The 'Deaf Mentality' is linked with language... If education is oral, I, the Deaf person watch them and develop my own opinion of what that [oral] person really is. I start to say 'What For?' signed right down here in my guts about them and their whole way of doing things.

It is very difficult to translate this passage, but one interpretation of the placing of the sign 'WHATFOR' deep down by the navel (instead of at its usual site) indicates the beginnings of the Deaf mentality, born *directly* from a questioning of the oralist / 'hearing' way of doing things. To translate it as 'What the hell is all this charade for?' captures this refined sense better. Ray is also suggesting that the idea of 'Deaf' as a

concept is actually born within the semantics of this sign, perhaps *the* root sign which marks the departure from accepting the Hearing norm. He goes on:

> That whole process [above] is interlinked. My language is communicated from my guts to my mind and back; that's the directionality of Deaf language - not anything coming from the outside, because nothing is coming in from there. Hearing way is from outside to the head and ear, then down to the guts. Deaf, because nothing coming in from outside, *develops their own language from their guts to their minds back and forth in a two-way relationship*. When Deaf eventually master hearing people's language ... they can adapt to that directionality system. But the mentality - that's uniquely their own. You can't remove that.

This unique construction, even if the meaning were better rendered in English, is not necessarily one which can be defended against the findings of cognitive psychology. However, if one examines this piece for its deeper meanings, one finds that both the 'WHATFOR' sign and the site of language origin are placed in the guts as a starting point for a continually developing interior monologue which reinforces one's Deaf identity in direct relationship to oralist absurdities daily visited upon it.

Therefore this alternative identity is arguably born from the oralist era. Prior to that time, the Deaf identity might not have been so heavily predicated on oppression. Nevertheless, because of the century-long maintainance of Oralism, identity appears inseperable from that oppression. As Ray summarised:

> There is a wall between them and us. Because of that Deaf get nothing from them - have to fend for themselves, think for themselves, make judgements for themselves.

He insisted that the only place it could truly flourish was the residential school, where there was enough 'Deaf time' for it to grow. There it became, in his words, 'I know that I am different, that I am Deaf. I accept my identity, and I'm not going to change myself'. Thus Deafhood was born and grew in a thousand little ways into a collective selfhood nurtured by a thousand little acts of rebellion, by a thousand and one little victories.

7. Summary

These examples illustrate some of the domains of positive Deaf experience, and the range and extent of rebellion. The important theme of collectivity runs through most; rather than being disparate acts by individuals or small groups, as in hearing schools, these 1001 small victories cohere into a internally coherent cultural system of Deafhood values and norms. Furthermore, they indicate that Deafhood is a learned process of actualisation in which develops from an empty 'deaf' vessel, in part defined by 1001 acts of resistance to the trope of deafness. It is too early in research into these subjects to assess the extent to which positive Deafhood experiences and identity development can be separated from an identity inextricably related to reactions against oppression.

5.4 ACCESS TO DEAF TRADITIONS AND A 'HISTORICAL SELF'

The data also revealed other sources for positive Deaf identities.

1. External Deaf Influences

Olivia gave an example all too common amongst Deaf children:

> When me about 6, friend said 'When we 16 or 18, *will die, cos no Deaf people older than that*. When me 11, at next school, Deaf adults would visit [for school reunions etc]. We'd run up to them 'Hello, how old you?' '25', or '30', or whatever. Ahhh, thank God, mean me not die young after all.

In her case, then, she spent five or more formative years believing that she would die soon after leaving school. Others essayed another interpretation with equally damaging implications. Ursula said:

> I know a lot of Deaf who thought that when they grew up, they would become hearing.

Thus the appearance of Deaf adults were literally life-confirming experiences for many Deaf children. It seems probable that these two negative constructions held more power in day schools, where there were fewer old pupil reunions or visits for sports days and so on.

Ursula went on to describe an experience often noticed by Deaf adults who visited schools during that time:

> When Deaf people visited the school, we would all just run over to them and drown them in questions ... we were like puppies, we were so enthusiastic.

Norma concurred:

> When they gone, they would be talk of the week, about that person, everyday, till it wore off. We never had lead storytellers - only the adults had that status.

The importance of these Deaf visitors was not simply identity affirmation. The information gleaned and disseminated by the children about Life was the primary focus; unsurprisingly, since it was almost their only source of information about the world. Comfirming this, others noted that in schools which had more recently accepted sign language and Deaf adults, Deaf visitors no longer held the same desperate attraction for the children. It must not be forgotten that such adult visits were intermittent - further research is necessary to establish whether this intermittent nature was simply seen as exceptional, or whether they carried resonances throughout the times of their absence.

For some luckier children, access to the adult Deaf world was obtained through early attendance at Deaf clubs. Interestingly, the four informants from hearing families who did so are all known as having strong Deaf identities; similarly a fifth had a Deaf handyman living in her otherwise hearing family. Harry summarised:

> I was adopted by this Deaf couple when my parents disappeared, and they would bring me to the club every week, and I would just stand there in amazement and delight, drinking it all in, all that BSL, and that sheer

> information, whole range of informations about life, I just absorbed it all, just learning, learning all the time right up to this very minute now. Deaf think me hot signing means mother-father Deaf. No, from community, taking it all in from there.

His emphasis on information, lifelong learning and equality (that each had things to teach the others), echoes Dorothy's points. Similarly, this early attendance at Deaf clubs offered these four a potential awakening of their 'historical selves'; for the children would witness as many as three older generations of Deaf people. How much actual use was made of this awakening potential is discussed later.

For all these children who came into contact with Deaf adults, both the information collected and the positive valuation of Deafhood helped themselves and their peers not only to resist the deafness construct, but to begin to actualise themselves and their Deafhood.

2. Importance of Deaf Families

Although Harry's example stresses the importance of the whole community over the single Deaf family, without this family he would not have had that access to Deaf life. Ursula's account explains why she never thought she would become hearing:

> My class, out of 9, 3 had Deaf parents, one had a Deaf sister and they strongly influenced us... I knew my destiny was to be Deaf [beautifully signed as 'aim high and far'], because I saw those parents; it was obvious really.

She and others described their experiences of staying with Deaf families:

> I was about 13, and it <struggles for words> was, just amazing. To be there and watch adults talk; it was the first time I had ever experienced that. It was so strange. Before that there was always a wall between me and adults.

This poignant example illustrates a gulf between Deaf and hearing culture; having to wait till 13 to have even a simple taste of adult conversation, or, in many cases, never to

get that at all until leaving school and joining the club. Ray's description of a similar visit captures another important dimension of Deaf family experience; ' They have a closeness, *a spiritual closeness* ... those children are confident and sign away to their parents, debating with them and everything'.

The confidence that comes of a Deaf-focused identity, the ability to debate, and the information about both Deaf life and majority society life, are the cornerstones of the influence brought into Deaf school life from Deaf families. Likewise, their visits to Ray's school were also summarised in similarly powerful language'. It influenced me to respect Deaf as a community, *a way of life, a culture,* before I knew those words'.

In Stefan's case his Deaf sister, 12 years older than he, 'was everything to me, my mother, my sister, my friend, my girlfriend, oh so much.' By contrast, he noted the limitations placed on Deaf families, 'We had a car; they never did', which illustrates their comparative poverty; he also noted their difficulties in getting their homework done at weekends because of the intensity of Deaf weekend life. He, like the others, also learned from their fluency in BSL and their wider vocabulary range.

Deaf families then, were the conduit by which the wider construct of Deafhood could be brought into the schools, and those external influences absorbed into their own alternative traditions. This was especially true where Deaf families had built up those traditions within the schools over successive generations. There is not room here to detail the experiences of those from Deaf families themselves, but several explained at length the burden of responsibility most either felt, or were given by their parents and the Deaf club community, to instil ideas about Deafhood in the others.

3. The Deaf Alternative Identity

There is some evidence that a number of children did not accept the negative valuation even prior to adult contact. Stefan told the story of his birth, as seen through his sister's eyes:

> Sis often told me the story of how I was born. She spent 3 years

> hammering away at my parents for another child, so that she could have a Deaf brother - I don't know how she could be so confident, but she was... When my mother was pregnant, she started to tell all her schoolmates that her Deaf brother was coming... Finally, when I was born, she proudly told them 'My baby brother Deaf - can sign'. And so she got revenge on any of her schoolmates who had been cruel to her!

This (possibly idealised) story illustrates the positive valuation the children placed on being Deaf; Stefan's sister's was able to 'get revenge' for the behaviour of her schoolmates simply by having something to which they aspired - a Deaf sibling.

4. A Deaf Alternative History

In the North-East and Scotland Oralism did not gain full control until the 1930s or so which is fortunate for this study, since it enabled Ray to describe processes that stopped at least two or more generations earlier in other parts of the UK. The difference between Ray and most other Deaf is that, with his strong belief in his Deafhood, he went on to actively explore its roots, initially through his regular meetings with 'old John M', fifty years his senior, who became one of his two 'mentors':

> I met him twice a week for years. He taught me so much about Braidwood's pupils. I'd say, 'which book was that from?' He said, 'No, it was passed down to us' [gives details]... Wow! Signed history, down the generations to me... My biggest regret - if I knew of the importance of Deaf history at that time, I would have had screeds! It fascinates me, how the Deaf passed things down like that back then - a sort of chain.

The most remarkable part of Ray's data was the unearthing of just such a 'Deaf chain'. Braidwood set up the first UK Deaf school in Edinburgh in the 1760s. The stories John M told came from the 1780s, taking 4 steps to reach Ray, and came from Braidwood's early pupils who visited John's school. Ray went on to give detailed accounts of his own research to locate those pupils based on John M's information, and of his success in corroborating several of his stories.

One result of the emergence of this chain is that Braidwood was not the oralist that many

history books claim him to be. As Ray put it 'When I read them, I thought the old man's [John M] gone potty [in saying Braidwood taught by signs]'. His subsequent research uncovered no evidence of Braidwood being an oralist, and at this time of writing, it seems that the Deaf history chain may actually be right, and the textbooks wrong.

Harry also gave detailed accounts which confirmed that this chain was maintained by Deaf teachers themselves, being fortunate that one of the last such teachers was then still active in his school. Space does not permit further elaboration, however.

Several important conclusions can be drawn from all this. One is the confirmation that prior to Oralism, Deaf schools passed down considerable information about their own communities and individuals in their own line of 'oral' history. Secondly, their knowledge of that Deaf history played an important part in supporting their self-concept, their Deafhood. Thirdly, this history survived in places up until the 1960s, but not to have made it past that time, except in very partial form to those who had a strong sense of Deafhood and wished to develop it by finding their place in this alternative history. This in itself offers important clues for further research. Fourthly, the demise of this history can be directly attributed to Oralism, which diminished Deaf pride in their own tradition. Fifthly, any Deaf 're-actualisation' consequently requires a re-instatement of Deaf history as an essential core of the Deaf experience.

5.5 OTHER DEAFNESS / DEAFHOOD CONTESTATIONS

These accounts of resistance and unity are of course only the first step in such research. Interactions around normal childhood fun and games, socialisation patterns, cliques, bullying and abuse all remain to be unpicked. However, I was not able to locate overt divisions around the basic deafness / Deafhood contestation - all Deaf children were equally low in status and apparently relatively untouched by any systems of honour or patronage, as Norma described:

> Even though I was head girl, it didn't carry any prestige for the other pupils. Wasn't like hearing school where it means something. It was just like I had a lot of extra responsibilities. It wasn't like I had power

either.

It was only with the advent of the oralist grammar schools that such overt deafness / Deafhood divisions can be found. Several informants gave extensive accounts of this process at school, whilst Dorothy and Frances were among those who described its first manifestations in their club in the 1950s. Space does not permit elaboration about this era, which in any case mostly comes after the period under investigation.

Norma described how, since being head girl conveyed no special status amongst her peers:

> I had to develop ways of persuading Deaf to do things; it didn't work to tell them. So that's where I learned how to tune into each person and find what worked with them.

This passage is uncannily similar to Dorothy's descriptions of working class / subaltern Deaf organisation in 6.5.5, suggesting that this may have actually developed within the schools, and is important when later considering Deaf organisational strategies. However, apart from Harry's description earlier, there was almost no mention of class. In his example of course, the benefits of having middle-class parents was explicitly turned to collective advantage by the children. Norma was the only other one who commented on class at school:

> Because we were equal at school, *then in Deaf community became same too*... You mean, if your parents had more money, you'd become a leader? No, nobody knew about things like that.

Wealth seems only to have meant that one could go home some weekends, (which, apart from going to films and staying up later, was a very mixed blessing as we have already heard). It does not appear to mean having more or better possessions, or rather that such possessions counted for anything in the Deaf value system.

In summary then, it appears, as Dorothy suggests in the next chapter, that it was only on leaving this everyday Deaf environment that sufficient Hearing influence could act to

fragment such Deafhood unity.

5.6 OTHER POSITIVE EFFECTS OF ORALISM

When a ceiling is imposed on a minority group, their experience contains less diversity, and thus more collective similarity as Fowler has explained (Sign On 1998). Ray explicated:

> When Deaf leave school and meet other Deaf, they realise they are the same. Not just language, and ways of communicating, but we had the same experiences in Oral schools, and *exactly the same thoughts*, the same examples.

Such a common national and international experience undoubtedly strengthens or underpins the already existing global Deaf bond described in Chapter 1. However there is also a deeper level. When discussing the realities of the pain above with Jade, a hearing parent of a Deaf child, she remarked:

> I used to think that Deaf people just happened to support one another because it was 'the right thing to do', if you like. But something else is going on that doesn't really happen much in the hearing world. It's like you are inside that person, experiencing their pain, and their pain is actually *inside you as well*.

This was a breathtaking observation which, it can be argued, captured the Deaf reality. It may well be that other minority cultures have an equivalent characteristic - certainly it is one which is foreign to majority cultures.

5.7 NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF ORALISM ON DEAF CULTURE

The sections above indicate an essentially collective attempt to construct an alternative, positive sense of Deafhood. However informants gave many examples of how Oralism negatively affected Deaf culture.

1. Fear and Submission

An all-pervading sense of fear was implanted early and easily re-evoked by those who wished to utilise it. When I asked Ray about the 'WHATFOR' sign at the stomach and asked why more Deaf did not now appear to manifest this, he replied:

> Remember, oralists would put their big mouths right in front of the children, wag their fingers; the child would shrink back in terror, not understanding. They were really frightened. If they raised their hands to sign, they were slapped. 'Ow' <copies look of bemusement and distress> *They didn't know what it was they were supposed to do, and they had no ways of finding out in those situations.* So fear was their living reality when they were very small and alone. Oralism's power was simply Fear... Like those old-time religions; 'Give me a child for the first seven years and he is mine for life'.

He then signed the WHATFOR sign at the stomach, the single vibrating finger, with a claw hand hovering above it, ready to swallow, twist or tear, and went on to explain that 'The Fear' never really left Deaf people; that it was augmented by the sense of being in a small community outnumbered in a 1,000 to 1 ratio, and reinforced by the lack of access to information that might explain how society worked. Nevertheless, passivity towards accessing this information is clearly instilled by the italicised passage above. 'The Fear' thus informed all encounters with anything outside of basic Deaf club life, intimidating many from taking political actions on their own behalf.

2. 'Stupidity', Self-confidence and Fatalism

Peggy described how the children knew that they were Deaf, but that to her peers, Deaf meant 'stupid' and that all things Deaf were inferior, and were not worthy of regard, of saving for posterity, or of passing on to future generations. Inevitably this led to lack of confidence. Ken summarised:

> You and I know how seriously Deaf lack confidence... Oralism alone did that; it concentrated on what they couldn't do well and ignored all their other skills.

Although this had changed during the Deaf resurgence, he went on 'They've got some of it back. But they still feel deep down they can't do anything significant'. Florence described her attempts to develop others' confidence:

> Sometimes try change them. They say like from school, 'They said I was bad, rubbish'. You say 'Don't worry, not your fault, education at school, you learned what? Zero! Well done; you still trying'. 'Oh thank you, thank you'. 'You have skill like storytelling', or whatever, 'Well done! All of us not the same. Me, storytelling, hate it, can't do it, leave you to do it'. 'Oh I see ... right, right'. You know, have to encourage, encourage all the time.

With loss of confidence came a sense of fatalism. Renata, describing the lack of response from the community to the loss of its only BSL TV programme, explained:

> It all goes back to school; people have said to me, 'We not surprised. Anything we get, we know hearing will take it away from us again one day'. That belief is very deep rooted.

This feeling that 'we can never be safe' is very important. Harry confirmed it whilst giving examples of why Deaf history was crucial for Deaf children. He added, without any self consciousness:

> [gives examples of Deaf achieving important posts]. We keep all this for the future ... in a combination safe somewhere ... when we're all dead, they may smack us down again, like the cycle of a wheel that always crushes the Deaf again and again ... so we must keep proof that Deaf-and-Dumb really could once do these things like we are now.

Similar examples have begun to appear in other European Deaf literature.

3. Neurological Damage

Ray asserted that:

> Many Deaf have poor attention span. Teacher at my school would write on the board and they don't seem to take it in; same when I've tried to

explain stuff to them, hard to keep their attention.

It is this kind of imposed 'attention deficit disorder' which has caused Deaf activists to become frustrated in their attempts to explain the need for changes and action.

4. Retardation of Opinion Development

All these factors combined to produce another aspect of Deaf culture frequently remarked on - the fear of giving one's own opinion, or even developing one. Stefan illustrated:

> When I put forward a motion at BDA conference... I watched how people decided which way to vote - by looking around and seeing what others were doing! Followed their friends or someone they feel has a strong mind. Means they understand issues? No. Means some of it goes past, so they look to others, 'You understand? Me not. OK, you do, me follow you'. *This is an exact copy of what happened in the classroom*. Many had no hope of understanding, so they let the others help them.

Although it can be said that parallels exist in the hearing world, the difference in degree is so tremendous that it essentially constitutes a different cultural situation.

5. Horizontal Violence

One cultural characteristic commonly spoken of among Deaf people is the swiftness to criticise and reluctance to praise. Several informants referred to this; the linkage they made, as for most of this section, was unprompted by me. Stefan summarised:

> Why? Because of upbringing, school abuse - Oralism really is abuse you know - years and years of the same pattern, *so negative is what they know*, what sticks in their minds and gets passed on to other Deaf.

His analysis is unusual in emphasising the repetition factor. Most accounts simply take the negativity as a whole. Bonnie added:

> A person who was labelled a failure at school can get their own back by being more critical of others.

Since an awful lot of people were so labelled, the potential for critical responses would appear infinite. Indeed, a related consquence is the degree of backstabbing commonly spoken of within the community, which Florence also refers to as jealousy. After the example above, she added:

> If not encourage them, it becomes 'It's always him/her that gets the attention, what about me?' Jealousy. That goes back to school, 'They can do it, me can't'.

Her analysis emphasises that if others felt they had more worth, and also recognised what they could do, they would be less jealous of jobs and credits going to the emerging Deaf leaders of the Resurgence. Although there are parallels with small hearing communities, the difference in degree, ie that 99% of Deaf people left school with no recognised qualifications, results in a qualitatively different cultural situation.

A related and highly important set of ideas were described by Bonnie:

> A child may sign a lot of information and get it right, but get criticised for signing it. Yet for just pronouncing two words correctly, they get praised. *That leads to an obsession with 'getting it right', but only with regard to very small things*. Or big things will be picked apart for very small reasons, or there is an obsession with small details of procedure, not the wider picture.

Certainly, one can imagine Deaf culture continuing to have difficulty in articulating the 'wider picture' whilst Deaf adults cannot determine the path of 'their' children's education.

6. Damage to BSL Expressiveness

Mark, a Midland hard of hearing ex-mainstreamed man in his early thirties, summarised:

> From 3-8 I was in the local Deaf school ... from 8-11 I was moved to the local PHU. I remember trying to sign there and the hearing kids just stared at me... That was a totally oral place too - *that was what messed up my sign language skills.*

Although in this example it is the extra dimension of mainstreaming which reinforced this damage, it does appear that the absence of creative play in sign, and the lack of much signed theatre and poetry, can be attributed to the limits placed on sign language development by Oralism. Norma and Harry also laid great stress on the importance of teaching Deaf children 'good, strong, visual BSL, same as hearing have to polish their English', and other forms of creative sign play.

7. Enforced Impotence

Another response, obvious perhaps in itself, but with less obvious consequences, was the amount of pain felt by Deaf people who, once they had left school, could not help but be aware that generations more were having to go through the same experience whilst they were helpless to intervene. Harry captured this feeling in this poetic description:

> Deaf like a pearl buried in the shell; all Deaf have skills in their pearls. And Deaf children have theirs too; they waiting in their shells at the bottom of the sea, waiting for Deaf adults to come down, open their own shells, and show the children what they have inside them, and help them open up and realise it and express it... All this time they've been sitting at the bottom of the ocean, just rotting sadly. Why?!

Ann expressed related thoughts:

> You ever notice how few Deaf families work in Deaf schools even now they've changed a bit? I think that's because Deaf of hearing families, they're used to low expectations, and so the awful things there don't bother them so much, or they just used to it being so shitty. But Deaf families, we are used to expecting things to be normal and equal... And so, going into a Deaf school, it just causes us too much pain and stress to see what could be, what should be.

The response from Deaf of hearing families to this was along the lines of 'We know it's shitty, but we have to try'. Nevertheless there was also a strong sense that Ann was right, that they were more easily able to adjust to negative school environments. It is not easy to immediately pinpoint how carrying this deep pain and the concomitant feelings of impotence affects specific areas of Deaf culture; it is safer to conclude that further research is needed to draw out examples, and that these feelings probably inform many aspects of the culture at a deeper level.

8. Self-division

The conflict between one's positive Deaf image and the imposed 'deaf' model must have inevitably resulted in inner conflict, knowing which one to trust or follow in particular circumstances. Ray gave an overall assessment of this process and produced a perspective of great significance for the study:

> [lists Deaf people he considers to now have the 'Hearing Mentality']... But don't forget; they all had the Deaf mentality once... What happens is that either they don't have the courage *to believe in it, to trust it, to go with it*, because of the Fear I mentioned earlier, or some of them decide to try and adopt the Hearing mentality ... they try to suppress their Deaf mentality, but in the heat of argument, they explode, and - voila! - out it comes!

He went on to liken such people's vain attempt to 'cling to the coattails of the Hearing Mentality' as that of 'a man trying to chase his cough'. This account exactly mirrors Dorothy's descriptions in the next chapter, except that her group expressed it more compassionately.

Undoubtedly, there are many other ways in which Oralism directly affected Deaf culture; these however were the most common themes the informants raised.

5.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

1. Deafhood as Actualisation

The key points of the complex passage above is the collective Deaf Mentality and the struggle to trust in it; an internalised site of the battle played out between deafness and Deafhood. Within the culture then, a major issue is the struggle to actualise this in everyday praxis. This is very close to what Dorothy describes later; that the subaltern / working-class Deaf continued to attempt to actualise themselves.

2. Deafhood as Essentially Covert

The data shows that little space was available to the children to overtly express their Deafhood (and indeed until Deaf schools are Deaf-centred, this cannot really happen). The covert nature of this expression is reinforced by the experiences under missioner colonialism in the next chapter. Confirmation of this came from Craig and others who went to Gallaudet, where t//hey experienced its obverse. Although being immensely impressed by the confidence, Deaf pride and achievements there, they found the less oppressive Deaf experience of the USA resulted in difficulties in forming an immediate bond with American Deaf people; their friendships centred around African and other orally-oppressed Deaf. Indeed, I found myself having the same reaction, 20 years later.

Thus UK Deaf cultural unity is predicated of necessity on a lower covert level of social praxis and political activity, the '1001 Victories', rather than overt 'Deaf Pride' concepts and actions.

3. The Historical Self

Although we have glimpsed the importance of this throughout the chapter, it appears that it too is covert since strategies for passing on one's own history have been quashed by Oralism. This self then appears largely to be a characteristic of a higher, overt level, which is still being re-developed. Nevertheless, the next chapter show that the simple fact of a maintained socio-historic continuity at club and national level has preserved a

basis for that redevelopment, which in part depends on finding and expressing whatever can be unearthed of earlier eras.

One dimension that might be explored is the extent to which children of majority society have access to versions of 'their' history through the media and, crucially, through their grandparents and others of that generation. It seems to be intimate contact with a generation removed from their own which is important in signalling the idea of history; their parents appear too close to be so regarded. Most informants from hearing families reported that they had no access to, and therefore no sense of, this dimension. Further study must explore the extent to which children from Deaf families could access this through by contact with their Deaf grandparents or other older Deaf.

4. The Battle with Passivity

The chapter illustrates many positive aspects of Deaf collectivity. However, one other unifying aspect is built on the knowledge of shared 'weaknesses' which may come to be rationalised as a virtue. When one examines in the children's move from Oralist colonialism to missioner colonialism, this battle with the 'virtues' of passivity and paralysis becomes a major cultural theme.

Ray's argument above summarises these processes. Chapter 7 will show how he and others, dissatisfied with the limited ways in which actualisation was manifested, and able to see ways in which the Deaf self was larger than that which the imposed blinkers suggested, attempted to move the debate further.

5. Deafhood as Inherently Collective

One theme running through the accounts above is a sense of the extent of collectivity. The words 'we', 'Deaf', and 'all' seem inextricably bound up with each other. The extent to which this phenomenon, uncharacteristic of majority societies, occurs in other minority groups is worth researching, as well as the extent to which they are either synonymous with oppression, or represent some more existential Deaf reality.

6. Deaf Joie de Vivre

Because the accounts above focus on the deafness / Deafhood dynamic, they do not capture anything like the full range of strategies for creativity, pleasure and self development experienced by those Deaf children, although some examples are given. Further research is required to bring these to the surface.

How do all the characteristics and dynamics exhibited in this chapter manifest themselves in adult Deaf life? The next chapter examines these in relation to the second traditional site of Deaf culture - Deaf club life in the era of missioner-colonialism.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ROOTS OF DEAF CULTURE

Part Two

Deaf Clubs and Deaf Subalterns

On leaving residential schools, Deaf young people then entered the second of the two traditional sites where Deaf culture was manifested - the Deaf clubs. However, in these sites as Chapter 2 explained, a different form of colonialism obtained, with its own implications for Deaf culture.

The data here suggests one primary cultural feature was a distinction between those who supported or went along with the forms of colonialism of that time, and those who resisted them. It also suggests that resistance was shaped both covertly and overtly by beliefs in the existence of a subaltern 'Deaf Way' consisting of a different set of 'Deafhood' values. However, great emphasis was also placed on the importance of cultural unity; the data illustrates cultural strategies used to develop and maintain that unity.

Once we have understood some of the dimensions of traditional club and school life, it will then be possible for later research in contemporary Deaf culture to identify the ways in which that culture has changed, and how this has affected the Deafhood concept.

6.1 THE MISSIONARY TRADITION

Chapter 2 described how some Deaf clubs were created by Deaf people before being taken over by the 'Mission for the Deaf', whilst others were established by the Missions themselves. The resulting two-tier administrative structure consisted of a board of management composed of hearing people, and a Deaf club social committee mainly of Deaf people. The sole link between the two was the Missioner to the Deaf. By 1980

most had disappeared, but the structure is still in place today in forms only slightly evolved.

During this period the titles of the Missioner changed. Deaf respondents used the same sign throughout but indicated those titles in lip patterns, which included 'Welfare Officer' (WOD), 'Social Worker', and 'Vicar' / 'Chaplain according to the period referred to. I have used either 'Missioner' or 'WOD' for the earlier period, and 'social worker' for the post-1970 years. Most of the data here is drawn from the period 1900 to 1960, particularly the 1920s and 30s. Almost all of it is new to the literature.

Dorothy, a sixth generation Deaf working-class woman in her fifties from the South-West, drew on her own experience, plus the stories passed down to her by her Deaf ancestors, to describe life between 1900 and 1970. Her memories of the linking role played by the Missioner were vivid:

> Old club, football chairman who? Missioner. Cricket chairman who? Him. Cycle club, snooker, everything you can think of, chairman him. Deaf would put up with it. Why? Because of 'Please can you phone for me?' That! 'Phone help you, I'd better be chair then.' 'Oh, alright then'. (Thinks to themselves, 'Damn!').

Dorothy also placed especial emphasis on his ability to raise money for the club. Albert, a child of Deaf parents (HMFD) in his early sixties with extensive experience in the voluntary sector, confirmed this pattern from his own life and work in the Midlands and the North West, and gave a comprehensive explanation of why such control was tolerated:

> If you wanted a job, you went to him, if you wanted to buy a house, if you wanted a council house, if you wanted to go to the hospital, you had to go to him.

The missioners not only facilitated and controlled Deaf people's access to the society which surrounded them, but was the gatekeeper for that society's representatives: 'Their word was powerful ... he alone could claim to understand Deaf people in the

eyes of the law... It's undeniable that some missioners might have had Deaf people put away [into mental institutions] because they were a nuisance or challenged them too much'. In respect of the club as a whole, 'in some areas, not all of them, the missioner would make the decisions [without consulting] the Deaf committee members' so that 'there was a lot of tension'.

This apparent control over every aspect of Deaf people's collective lives was manifested in many small examples. Ken described the situation he found in many clubs in the North of England:

> Deaf ... made the tea and biscuits ... made a small charge, and at the end of the evening they'd add it all up ... and give it all to the missioner to put in his office. They had no idea of any ongoing totals ... they'd say 'Must, must, missioner look after money.' I'd say 'why don't you look after it yourselves; it's your money. You could buy cakes, or save up for trips out'. 'Oh no, missioner - his. Very good. Helps us'.

Albert described how these examples extended to the administrative structure of the Mission:

> The decisions made by the hearing committee were never brought down to Deaf people - they were never informed. Never received annual reports, never knew how much money was being collected or spent, never knew what power the committee had, *and the relationship of it all to their lives they never really understood.* They were totally disenfranchised. Totally! No voting rights about the building, about the employment of staff, about finance or any of that. Now if you think about that, that is total and full oppression!

It is not yet possible to give precise dates when missioner control began. Some Deaf people suggested that it began after Oralism, when those Deaf able to read, write and debate died out. Others, sceptical of such a 'Golden Age' reading, suspected that this pattern existed from the very beginning, as soon as money was raised to purchase a building. Lysons (1963) appears to support the former theory. However, Ken felt that:

> Most missioners of a pure church background were well meaning, and the Deaf needed their pastoral care, especially the older ones. But ...

those with a 'welfare officer' type background, they were the worst.

He was referring to the 'WOD' trained by the Deaf Welfare Examination Bɑard, where the religious aspect of the work was a smaller part of the qualification. Albert described them:

> It was a truism that these were people who decided they wanted to work with the Deaf, and kind of 'had' to do the religious training. They weren't exactly 'men of God' by a long way, many of them.

Nevertheless, as Lysons' figures showed, all put in long hours at the Deaf club; many lived above it or nearby. In a world hostile to Deaf people, this dedication was cited as a positive quality and cited whenever some Deaf people dared to criticise them. Ken gave an example:

> I know 3, maybe 4 areas where ... it turned out that the missioner had been fiddling the money and got fired for it ... some Deaf would say 'missioner fiddle, bad, fiddle, should out'. These were the same people who had attacked you when you criticised him, 'Shame on you attack missioner, whatfor? He *heart-for-Deaf,* him!'

In a significant percentage of cases, the missioner was a child of Deaf parents, and thus even more intimately tied to Deaf cultural life. The ambivalence of the current cultural status of such 'HMFD' may owe something to this tradition, but is not explored here.

6.2 'CLASS' DIFFERENCES IN DEAF SOCIETY

Chapter 2 explained how Deaf people from these eras were all subalterns. Virtually all worked in manual trades; the exception being the occasional Deaf missioner or a few high-ranking members of the BDDA. Nevertheless some respondents identified class dimensions, and patterns of resistance which they related to class; I follow this distinction and draw conclusions about that terminology in the summary.

Dorothy was the first to bring these to my attention. This was a very significant insight;

in all the literature on deafness, there is virtually nothing about differences between social groups. In fact, she herself was surprised by her memories; 'I never thought about any of this before. You asked and it came out of my hands'. She gave several lengthy accounts, so rich in minute detail that only the broadest themes can be covered here. The two groups she identified had their own areas within the clubroom:

> The first group you see when you walk in? The working class group, arguing - [Town] versus [United]... The women sat near them, but separately. 'Look at your man, arguing again!' 'Ah, I'm fed up with him', and so on. The middle class would sit separate, leave them to it ... the other group who were separate was the old people. But - important thing - *they were all in that one hall together.*

The significance of being 'all together' is explored later. When describing these two groups, Dorothy's terminology varied. Sometimes she referred to them as the 'upper' and 'lower' groups, and sometimes in the terms used above. I have chosen to narrate this chapter in class terminology for comparisons with other societies to be considered. In numerical terms, she felt that the upper group consisted of about 25% of the club, and the lower group, 75%.

Because the information was so new to the literature, it was important to verify it. Some material was presented to the discussion group, but the presentation focused on 'class'. The only people in the group who were consciously aware of such differences were in their fifties; even those in their forties were not aware of it. Afterwards however, I presented the information in a different form, referring to the 'middle class' Deaf group who were 'in' with the missioner. Each person immediately understood and were aware of such patterns in their own clubs. Their own terminology for the two groups varied, and will be used within their own quotations. Florence, from a Deaf family and from the South-West recalled the difference after re-presentation thus:

> There was your workingman's group over here, all laughing and signing all over the place ... and then over here was the other group, acting rather dignified, wanting to be left alone a bit, not to be bothered.

Ken described the 'middle class' group by focusing on a 'typical' couple:

> I have a picture in my head of an old couple similar to the black Andy and Amos characters ... they were nice, respectable, and they'd come to the Deaf club well dressed ... they had their own little world, their own church, their own code of conduct, very respectable ... outside their little world they mean absolutely nothing at all <snaps fingers> but within it they had some social standing and importance.

Albert also gave a vivid description of that group, albeit a much more sympathetic portraiture, explaining why they behaved as they did. He noted that:

> Their body language was much more formal ... so their signing was much more restricted in space ... and their facial expression maybe wasn't as open.

Dorothy explicitly linked the middle-class group with their (hearing) parental background:

> Did the upper group have better jobs? Some. Was their education better? No, sorry, some weren't very clever! Their families had money - they left it to them in their will.

These social groupings are similar to those within majority society with certain significant differences. Apart from the fact that there appears to be no Deaf 'upper-class', those in the 'middle class' group were different from their hearing peers, as Albert was aware:

> I met some of their brothers and sisters, and they were much more, how to put it, relaxed and confident middle class people. But their Deaf siblings were much more tensed up and cautious, more restricted in their views and their beliefs. Similar really to what they call the petit-bourgoisie, you know, the working class trying to climb. *Very obsessed with what was 'right' and 'proper' in ways that their hearing siblings weren't.*

This suggestion of the absence of a 'comfortable' middle-class is consistent with the concept of all Deaf people as subalterns - the upper group seemed to be striving to re-

create their supposed inherited status within the limited strategies and socio-cultural space available to them, with the emphasis on 'striving'. These differences are important as will later be seen, and consistent with information given by Dorothy, Ken, Ray and Frances, the four giving the most detailed accounts of the past. So, although the term 'petit-bourgois' seems to me a title which more accurately reflects their behaviour and attitudes, I will stay with the phrase which indicates their actual class origins.

Significant also is that, unlike the majority society, the Deaf club and community felt compelled to maintain a unified community, and had to devise strategies for co-existence. The cultural consequences of these two points inform the rest of the study.

Another difference from majority society concerned Deaf concepts of a good job. As Dorothy put it:

> Deaf women working as typists. Call that working class? Deaf community didn't. Typing is a posh job!... Or if you worked in [famous name factory] ... don't see that as working class, even if you only a packer there.

There were also some Deaf people who did not fit into either group, although only Albert and Ken talked about them. No class distinctions were made within the youth group. Amongst the old people, only Dorothy remembered a distinction:

> The old people sat in two separate groups too, but next to each other. They dressed differently too - one was more formal than the other. And the way they were with each other - when someone came to their own area [of the club], they would shake hands or hug the people on their table, but be very cool with the other table. In fact they were much more standoffish with each other than the younger groups - there were some who wouldn't even speak to each other.

Since Dorothy is talking about the 1940s when the old people were in their 70s and 80s, *it would appear that such class differences have existed from at least the turn of the century onwards.* However, this narration does not suggest that the two groups can

always be clearly identified. Dorothy and Albert both described cultural situations where they overlapped, such as marriages between the two, or in those from the middle-class who were passionately involved in working-class sport.

The cultural significances of these class differences, and how they combine to suggest the 'deafness / Deafhood' polarities will now be explicated.

6.3 INTER-GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

1. Language and Class Attitudes in the Early 20th Century

Growing up in a time when hearing aids were rare, it appeared that the distinctions made in modern day Deaf culture between 'Deaf', 'hearing', and 'hard of hearing' people, between 'BSL users' and 'Signed English users', were configured quite differently; Dorothy illustrated this:

> This sign for hearing [shows sign with its root in 'speaking'] - that used to be the old sign. Then it changed through missioners' influence to this [uses sign that indicates 'good ears, good speech']. It's only recently we've been able to get back to our true, Deaf's own sign. Deaf not know meaning of what it is to 'hear'. But know what 'speaking' means - when hearing speak, you will see things start to happen!

She then recalled a significant example of how the earliest generation above referred to those with speech:

> This the old sign for what we call HOH now - 'Deaf and dumb, hearing (speaking) skilled'. See, everybody was 'Deaf and dumb'. Just some happen to be able to speak, that's all.

Albert confirmed this reading:

> They were all 'proudly Deaf and Dumb' - speech was just an added bonus; the others were Deaf and part of the community, but they could speak, that's all.

This inclusiveness is significant for examination of Deaf unity, especially since more partially Deaf and deafened members were members of the community in those times. Similarly, it is important to note that speech was seen as merely an individual attribute, a skill which could be used as part of a *'Deafgelt'*, that is, a talent, ability or behavioural quality which could be used to benefit the community. Dorothy extended this example from spoken to written English skills:

> There was so little attitude around English in those times. People would say 'So and so clever at writing English - best ask them' when they needed to [acts it out]. No big deal at all. None of this stuff like now about 'What, you've never heard of that?' or 'Oh, can't you spell that?!'

She gave an extended example of how those with good English would be called round of an evening to assist, but were first offered an evening meal, 'must give this first - respect'... 'Those people never said "what, you can't read?" Never, never never'.

Despite these more unified attitudes around English, there were class-markers within different styles of BSL. As Florence described it:

> They had like refined behaviour in their signs, [mimics] 'leave us alone now please', polite signing, yes, they signed different, yes [laughs]. Not like the others, signing all big and all over the place, rough and tumble 'ah it's alright mate, it doesn't matter, let's get on with it'.

Albert also discussed the two signing styles, but attributed their use situationally, according to whether it was Saturday night downstairs at the club, or Sundays upstairs after church.

It is part of received Deaf tradition that the older generations fingerspelt far more than today. Ray discussed this at length, but Dorothy distinguished between types of fingerspelling:

> Working class use more flourish, some letters almost like a sign themselves. Also use larger area of space. Look, [demonstrates both

styles, with 'sacked' and 'shocked'].

On my visits to the old people's club I was able to observe this, particularly on certain letters like 'k'. Indeed, the renditions of some (whose dress and manner marked them out as working-class) were so exactly like Dorothy's, inflections, mannerisms and all, that this lent all of her accounts a greater validity.

2. Class Patterns in Social Activities

Most informants felt that both groups attended church. This owed not a little to the Deafworld truism 'Not at church Sunday, missioner won't find you a job Monday'. Dorothy pointed out that their motives differed somewhat:

> The upper group, they went to please the missioner, or because they believed in all that stuff. The others, they went for social reasons. What else was there to do?!

She subsequently fleshed out the differences, noting particularly how much was really understood of what the missioner signed, how much was just pretending to understand, and both groups' attitude to this pretence. One especially telling (and amusing) example of the working class attitude to the proceedings was this:

> Our missioner love himself, not God. Old Deaf would sign 'God-His' to describe that! His signing style showed that attitude too.

It is difficult for this joke to come across in translation, but the sense of it is that God belonged to the missioner rather than vice-versa. Certainly many were perceived to act as if their views were a direct extension of His.

Sport was an extremely important part of Deaf community life; class differences were apparent there too and are discussed in more depth later. Club outings, holidays, and visits to and from other clubs likewise manifested class distinctions. In some clubs workshops for learning trades and repairing items produced similar patterns and are

discussed later.

The next three sections examine further manifestations of the values and attitudes of the different classes.

6.4 'MIDDLE-CLASS' ATTITUDES

1. Towards the Missioner

Given the missioner's dominance, one of the most important sites for Deaf social expression was through the social club committee. Dorothy attributed the origins of class differences to the manner in which this committee was selected:

> Committee mostly upper-class. Hard to get onto it. Maybe related to their [upper group] parents' funds supporting the club? My father always said 'If you rich, easy involve Deaf club; if you poor, difficult'.

Albert elaborated on the effects of the missioner's selection of committe members thus:

> One of the biggest problems facing the community was that when people became committee members, sometimes they became a bit too arrogant.

Unsurprisingly, different attitudes between the classes towards the missioner could be distinguished. Dorothy explained how she felt this operated:

> The working class, if they don't like a committee decision, some would get a group together to go to the missioner. The middle class would just keep quiet... They want the missioner to like them. Perhaps they were afraid to rebel in case their families got to hear. When the two groups would argue, working class would say, 'We help you, but you bow down to missioner, what for? Stupid, you'. Oh they didn't like that!

Thus, what emerged over time was a 'middle-class' or petit-bourgeois group selected and approved by the missioner, and used to carry out many aspects of his policies and beliefs in his absence. The strategies varied from club to club, as did the types of

situations in which they were employed, but this basic pattern, as reported by a number of the informants, appears to have obtained over much of the UK for most of the century.

Albert's portrayal of this group was more sympathetic. He described how, in a world which so intensely looked down on Deaf people, their primary opportunities for gaining self-respect lay in how they dressed and carried themselves in public, with a necessary dignity. Likewise, their prominent roles on the Deaf club committee were vital to support that dignity. His illustration of the fragility of that self-image was moving:

> So you had a position [at the club], and you were smartly turned out. But you might be a manual labourer or a carpenter, and maybe the missioner would visit you at work to talk about club issues. So he'd come in, in his suit, and you're there as a labourer, in your overalls, with your collar open and maybe dirty hands and face, and your position would drop - wham - right down low compared to his. And you felt it, I think, very much. It must have inside, you know, kind of *given the lie to the reality you wanted so badly to portray*... Take [G] for example - people think of him as a very important Deaf man of his time, and yet ... he worked on the docks as a labourer, waiting to be picked for the privilege of unloading ships. And the missioner could play on that.

These internal contradictions are not only a marker of the difference between Deaf and hearing class structures, but seem vitally important in informing the middle-class anxiety that informed many of their actions and beliefs.

2. Towards the 'Working-class' Deaf

Dorothy described how the middle class group regarded the others:

> The upper Deaf will say 'Deaf-his-shame'; they're referring to the lower class Deaf and talking about their way of signing. Also they'd say, 'Deaf, lampost-his, meaning they would look down on those who stood around the lampost talking after the club closed... They could afford the bus fare; the others couldn't!

(It should be noted here that the lampost, a source of light at night for Deaf people, is a

significant symbol within Deaf culture, one that carried even more weight in the era before homes were lit with electricity. It also rendered Deaf people and their signing highly visible to the public. Since most Deaf gatherings took place after work, willingness to be seen signing in public was symbolised by the lampost. By looking down on those Deaf prepared to expose their Deafhood thus, the middle-class revealed attitudes which go beyond class to the core of their self-identity, as explored later.)

It is crucial also to note the way the group refer to the others as '*Deaf*' to denote the differences between them. Since they are not denying their own deafness, 'Deaf' in this context appears to connote 'behaving Deaf' as opposed to 'rising above one's deafness'. But what did the term 'Deaf' connote for them? Ken offered a common description:

> The 'Favoured Group' saw themselves as the clever ones, and the others, who were strong BSL, were seen as the 'stupid Deaf - shame'.

This phrase was extremely widespread and still exists. Ann, from a South-West Deaf family in her mid-forties remarked:

> Yes, that was it, 'the Deaf', or the 'stupid Deaf'. Eventually I turned round to one of them who was sounding off and said, 'Yes, the stupid Deaf - you're talking about me - I'm one of them!' He didn't know what to do, because no-one ever challenged them that directly.

'Shame', the other part of the phrase, is significant to the study. Dorothy caricatured and encapsulated the full meaning of that response:

> 'Oooh look! Isn't that naughty?! Shh, say nothing ... look at the Deaf signing away ... how stupid they are ... how shameful ... they're embarrassing us'.

Another phrase Dorothy demonstrated, one which is hard to translate, was also significant - 'Shame, not bad / can't help it'. Although this particular phrase is dense in cultural information because it was used in many different ways, it was also used in a context similar to the above, as Albert recalled:

> Yeah, 'Shame, can't help it'. In that context it would be used both to put the others down and also to imply that they knew no better.

Ken gave a similar example, discussed later. He also drew attention to how the middle-class values interrelated with both the working-class and the missioner:

> Anyone who challenged them ... oh dear oh dear! 'Shame on you, you should behave like us'. Of course they would tell the missioner and the others what you had said... And if any Deaf came along to suggest Deaf people should have more power, then he would get you ostracised or thrown out by using his Deaf lackies to spread the word that you were a no-good so and so.

This interrelatedness was observed by Dorothy even on occasions when the middle class were trying to be helpful:

> The upper group when they reported back [from meetings] *were* honest. They *did* try to give good information. But they would, like, stand at the front, flash the lights, and make everyone watch. The Deaf would look at each other and make faces... [The others] want a nice orderly formal meeting - all must sit down quietly, like in church, with themselves as missioner! The information would go past us; we only saw their attitude, that's all.

In this example, Dorothy also refers to her 'own' group as 'the Deaf', again quite unconsciously; although it is not clear which group initiated the label, its emergence here suggested that the working-class Deaf were quite happy to accept the label. Another situation gave a telling example of middle-class attitudes:

> Middle-class Deaf would give money to the others [for their sporting activities]. 'Oh, thank you very much.' 'Now, [join your] committee, me?' So the others couldn't refuse them! Also it was part of how they oppressed them without their realising it. 'Wow, they gave us 10 shillings! Hope they'll do that every year'.

This example is contrasted in the working-class examples in 6.5.2. Both groups would give to each other, but only one *asked for something back in return*. Thus, in contrast

to the emphasis on practical Deafgelt above, this form implied a purchase disguised as reciprocity.

3. Towards Hearing People

Four primary situations and attitudes emerged from the data. The first relates to behaviour in public. Dorothy contrasted this group's attitude towards hearing people with that of her own. We have seen above that signing in public was disapproved of. She continued:

> The Deaf upper group, they would try to be oral with hearing people, not want them to see their signs... They wouldn't sign much in public. If they did, and they got mocked, like we did on the bus, they would sign small to each other, 'Best ignore them'.

Indeed, signing on the bus emerged as a significant theme among the respondents. As Frances, whose family's social status tended towards the middle-class group, remarked:

> When mum went out on the bus, she always told us 'don't sign' or 'keep it low, down there - hearing will call us monkeys, or go for us'.

Albert produced this same story almost word for word, except that he added that his father was less bothered than his mother, going on to say:

> And yet, if they were together on the street, they would be signing away to each other and not be bothered [laughs].

Frances told of the same pattern and laughed in exactly the same place, adding 'Why? What's the difference anyway?', although of course such difference is not only a marker of cultural importance, but indicates the degree to which culture is precisely that which is 'taken for granted' about social life. Further study would be able to bring deeper features such as this to the surface.

The second situation was the workplace. Dorothy gave examples of confrontations that

would occur between Deaf and hearing working-class people, and described the middle-class's reaction when they told stories of oppression at their workplaces:

> If they got into a hassle at work similar to us, they'd say 'Best me patience with it, have good job [that I don't want to lose]. I'd say, 'No, go on, tell your boss what happened'. But they'd go 'Ooh, no, no.'

Dorothy's inference here was that reporting incidents of harrassment would not really result in them losing their jobs. Nor were their jobs necessarily better than the other Deaf group. Rather, it was the general attitude of fearful respectability that was key.

The third public situation involves obtaining information from hearing people. Dorothy described the contrast with the working-classes' modus operandi, as described in 6.5:

> When my parents told that story about the tram at the club, the upper group said 'Oh, I couldn't do that'. Or 'Ooh, that was rude'.

The significance of the sign 'rude' is examined later.

The fourth public situation involved generalised attitudes towards, and confrontations with, hearing people. The examples given in 6.5.3 of such clashes were contrasted again by Dorothy:

> Would the middle class tell a hearing person that they were stupid because they couldn't sign? No! They'd say 'Hearing right. Have speech, talk can. Wrong you argue, pleeeease don't.'

In summary, then, it was their general unwillingness to confront hearing people that was in her view ultimately damaging to Deaf people, as will be seen.

6.5 'WORKING-CLASS' ATTITUDES

1. Towards the Missioner

Albert described one significant aspect of the missioner culture:

> The missioner could come to your house at any time of the day or night! I've been home when they've arrived at 11 o'clock at night! Oh there was no appointment - he'd just arrive on your doorstep! And expect to be welcomed, to sit down and have a cup of tea.

Dorothy confirmed this, adding:

> It's always the working-class who didn't want the missioner around. 'Get lost! Not going to look into my affairs, my rent how much etc. Get lost'. The middle-class would ask him for help with forms. Working-class, most ask their family, keep it within themselves. Or my father would ask someone at work for help with forms. In return, he'd buy them a cup of tea.

As we have seen, those Deaf with good English would also come round to help in similar situations. Another story has particular resonance here:

> One day, foreman came to father and said 'Go to office'. Arrived, found the missioner there. Asked boss why - he said 'I can't sign, so I called him in'. Father said '*You can fingerspell - I taught you,*' so he slowly did. Then father turned to missioner and said 'I don't want you coming here in future'.

Dorothy described how the working class group would on occasion band together to challenge the missioner. Albert observed what happened on such occasions:

> They would say, 'we don't agree' and explain. But so often the missioner would just patronisingly dismiss them. They didn't stand a chance.

Hemmed in on all sides by attitudes and decisions they did not agree with, the working

class Deaf nevertheless continued to resist in whatever small ways they could. Dorothy told a long story about being in church when very small, becoming bored, and kicking the pew in front. The missioner being the only who could hear it, there was soon a confrontation:

> When the missioner told me off, Deaf working-class straightaway said to him 'She's not bad / can't help it', and they explained why to him. Father would encourage me to say my piece - he'd only defend me if I couldn't cope. He asked me 'Why kick?' 'Bored.' 'Well tell him then!' Oooh dear, that was something. The missioner was shocked. The middle-class just sat and looked down their noses at me.

Another example concerned the sacking of a junior missioner who the Deaf loved 'because he respected Deaf people'. When the missioner put up a notice announcing his departure, one of the working class group wrote 'Sacked' across it. This was reported to the missioner, who came and interrogated the group:

> We played dumb, each denied it, and when he finally pinned someone down, we all said 'We told him what to write', so he couldn't punish anyone.

The example may appear somewhat child-like, but in fact illustrates a cultural differences between hearing and Deaf communities. It is not that the example is necessarily child-like, or that Dorothy is obsessed by minutiae, but that the power wielded by the missioner and his loyal Deaf group was so all-encompassing that such 'victories' were of necessity very small. This example, and the others in this section reinforce the Deaf cultural concept of *'1001 [small] Victories'*, which as Chapter 5 mentions, may have been developed in the Oral school. The other significance of this example is the display of working-class group solidarity and willingness to share the consequences; this *collectivity* is a resonant cultural feature, as will be seen.

2. Towards the 'Middle-Class'

The respondents identified four areas of responses to the middle-class's attitudes to them. One was to argue about principles. The most common examples given by

Dorothy concerned money and the principle of contributing to the community:

> The working-class would help the club in their own ways. They'd repair shoes at the club workshop and charge 2d or 3d less than you would pay outside. Or they'd clean the church on Sunday, or polish the brass or repair the building.

When asked by the middle-class for contributions towards the club, there would be tension and refusal: 'They can afford to pay - let them! Me, I do it by working for the club'.

The second type of response was to assert their own achievements:

> If there was a sporting event on and another club visited us, we have to cook dinner for them of course. The working-class wives would do the shopping, and the middle-class wives would cook it... At the Fayres, the working-class would make the food for it, but this time the middle-class would be in charge of laying it all out nicely on a stall, do the serving, and run the raffles. So the working-class wives would go round pointing out to everybody that it was them who had made the cakes and stuff.

When this situation was presented to Albert, he responded:

> [laughs] That's right. Oh they were so proud, yes! And rightly so. There was tremendous pride at sales of work ... seamstressing particularly, and some of the stuff was really beautiful... So they would say 'I made this' or 'I made that'.

This refusal to be cowed, even at such public event, (among the very few times hearing people came into the club), was indeed one type of response that those without power could make.

The third type of response was a strategy for keeping the middle-class in their place. At a time when cars were rare in the Deaf community, the first people to get one (after the missioner) were invariably middle-class members:

> The Deaf would go over to that person by their car, look it over and say 'Nice. Lucky that your mother died and left you the money. This nice way to remember her'. You see the working-class have ways *to put him in his place without being mean*. It was said nicely ... so that they would stay friends.

The last words are also crucial. Given the pressures on a community which has to actively maintain the co-existence of a wide range of people, such cultural strategies were essential. In this example there are two underlying principles; the need to put an individual or group in their place, but to do it in ways that do not result in community division.

The fourth type of response actually underpins all of the above:

> The working-class would sign 'His way, shame, not bad / can't help it'. See that sign I've used? It means they can't help it, poor things. It means they understand *that it's not their fault.* Why? Go back to school days; both signed the BSL way... When they grew up, they changed. *See, the middle class were proper Deaf before*. When they got out in the hearing world, they felt they had to change, but the working-class kept their own Deaf pride; know the others lost something, so they sign 'not bad / can't help it'.

Albert, although growing up 150 miles away, also recalled the same sign and the same set of meanings. This sign and its connotations has all but disappeared now.

This example confirms the asseertions of informants in Chapter 5 that class differences were not noticeable at school. Its significance also lies in its *understanding and fundamental compassion,* marking a crucial difference between hearing and Deaf class-cultures. It is virtually impossible to imagine such compassion being expressed towards the middle-class by working-class hearing people, and illustrates the depth of (covert) Deaf pride felt by working-class Deaf people, and the importance attached to values centred around being a 'proper Deaf' person. Again, this pride is made visible in (necessarily) small ways; the '1001 Victories' are exemplified in each situation in this section.

3. Towards Hearing People

As with the Deaf middle-class, responses indicated four basic situations and attitudes. The first, general public interaction, reveals a striking contrast. As Dorothy tells it:

> If hearing people mocked us, we were used to standing up to them. One time all our family were on the bus going to [V] ... and two people behind were mocking our signs. So we'd turn round and go [gestures] 'Yes - What?' That would shut them up, then at the end of the journey they would come up and say 'sorry'. Father would tell them not to do it again, and that would be it, shake-hands.

There are numerous examples of this type of confrontation, some intending to achieve a positive end, and some, like the stories Florence, Albert, Ray and Ken recounted, where the object was simply to put the others to flight.

The second arena of interaction was the workplace. Dorothy describes the working-class's raison d'etre thus:

> They always carried ABC [fingerspelling] cards and forced them on hearing when they started a new job. I remember going to the works' Christmas party and being amazed that everyone there could fingerspell to me.

Colin, a Deaf WOD in his sixties gave a similar and very detailed example. It would be naive to assume this approach was universal, but set in the wider context of this section, does seem to contain a significant degree of truth. Albert's response to this question was interesting:

> If the other workers approached Dad, he would give them a card, but he wasn't going to force them to do it. But they did tend to approach him anyway. And if the managing directors were coming round, he'd always make sure he gave *them* cards! [laughs heartily]

By illustrating the Deaf refusal to be daunted by their 'superiors', Albert's version is in tune with the spirit that Dorothy is describing. However, it was not always so

harmonious, as Ray described:

> [S] said when he worked on the shipyard as a welder, they would say 'you do this or that, pick that up', things that were not his job, so he wrote down 'I'm a welder, not a cleaner.' So they hit him. And there were a number of them gathered round looking down at him - 'Pick that up'. There he was, one Deaf person alone. No Deaf community at work ... it was from incidents like that that he came to describe us as 'The Little People'.

In situations like this, it was impossible to successfully assert one's Deafhood. But others did so wherever possible. Ray went on:

> [D] - he was a Deaf bugger! A master craftsman with his own business too... One time a hearing man borrowed £5 from him, spent it on drink and he and his hearing gang laughed him out when he went to get his money. So he went to the man's house, took all the slates off his roof! Police were called, D wrote 'yes I have his slates and will give them back when he repays me.' So the gang had to go and have a whipround and just scraped up the money. So then C said 'Those slates - they're in your garden shed!' You see, he was crafty enough not to actually steal them. Oh he was a tough bugger!

Dorothy told a story where one Deaf man who was being harrassed went to his foreman and said 'I quit because of this'. The man panicked, told the manager and the next day the parties involved shook hands and changed their behaviour. (Shaking hands was also a cultural marker which frequently came up, though space does not permit its exploration).

Another example of the 1001 Victories I observed concerned a Deaf man who had got the unlikely job of driving a radio cab. When asked how he knew what his next job would be, he replied 'Oh I make the passenger call my base and get that address. Some won't do it, of course, so then I'd have to drive back to base to find out. But most did. No problem really!'

Several stories were recounted by respondents relating to the frustrations of being excluded from union activities, since the men's fingerspelling would be lost in the heat

of meetings. Nevertheless they made attempts to get the information. Albert gave one example:

> Father stopped a meeting once ... he was asked to vote and he said 'I don't know - you tell me what it's about so I can vote'. And they stopped the meeting. And he changed the vote!... Because he had the information he was able to persuade them to change their position <looks proud>.

Not all examples were of conflict, and respondents cited instances of co-operation and mutual help, told with a similar pride in each small victory.

The third situation, that of obtaining information in public, produced several stories. Dorothy told two such:

> We had a lot of interaction with those we knew on a sort of 'all right mate?' level. But also ... I remember one time in the town centre when a tram knocked somebody down. Mother went up to hearing and got out of them what had happened so she could give all the other Deaf the information.

The trope of 'Information' being a highly significant Deaf cultural value, obtaining it for the collective pool of 'Deafworld Knowledge' is an important part of the 1001 Victories. The contrasting middle-class response to this example is described in 6.4.3. Another story illustrates Deaf ingenuity in respect of neighbourliness:

> One time when I was small, the ambulance came to my street; my parents sent me out to find out what had happened... I got the information and brought it home. The next day father was able to go up to the woman whose husband was the victim, and use that information to get the woman 'talking', and she told him the full story. So he was able to show sympathy, *and* he could bring the full story home to us <indicates father's signing it with much smiling and pride at his achievement>.

The fourth area of response concerned general attitudes. Roy and Dorothy both gave examples of situations where if the hearing person did not sign, the working class Deaf,

far from being cowed by their own minority situation would call the others 'stupid'. The very different middle class responses to such situations are described in 6.4.3.

It is important to emphasise that the means of communication used by the working-class in these interactions was mostly pen and paper, with some vocalisation where necessary.

4. Significance of 'Working-class' Interaction

The picture which emerges from the two sections above is one of middle-class Deaf avoiding conflict, and working-class Deaf meeting it. One dimension remains to be noted - the implication that working-class hearing people are the ones who 'attack' Deaf people. However, the situation contains a more profound reading. Corfmat, a hearing child of Deaf parents, gives an account of differing class attitudes to sign language:

> Our friendly [Air Raid] volunteers were not from the factories; they were mainly clerks ... but I have found that factory hands were usually more extrovert and less inhibited, and they would wave their hands and create efficient communication. (Corfmat 1990, p.104)

In recounting his father's life story, he verifies much of what our informants have said, including a moving account of his father's (1001 Victories) ingenuity in becoming the First Aid officer of his large factory. In consequence:

> He had taught many ... the rudiments of the Sign Language, and ... his friends grew to a sizeable number. The number was unbelievable at times, for when we were out together he would often wave his walking stick to a distant 'friend' across the road.

Albert summarised the essential class differences:

> I feel that working-class hearing people may have been more accepting of Deaf people than the middle-classes, funnily enough, because the latter would say one thing and do another, or think another. Or ... go all the way round to say something, not be direct. Whereas the working-classes might clash with Deaf people, be rude to them, but in the hurly burly, the Deaf would respond to that, and the two groups would find

> some level of respect for each other. They both got their hands dirty, so to speak.

There remains one more significant example of working class Deaf and hearing interaction, namely the relationship between Deaf working-class rebels and pub life. This is examined in the next chapter.

5. Class Differences and Organising Strategies

Dorothy's accounts here revealed extremely important differences between the 'Deaf way' and the missioner-influenced ways. She described the latter in 6.4.2 as standing at the front, calling for people's attention, and delivering what was felt by the working-class to be a self regarding monologue. This way of organising was referred to as 'Flash-Lights', which was the signal for such announcements to be made. The others had a different approach:

> Working-class very clever - know how to unify and engage people's interest. Would use their particular hobby or passion, or their knowledge of that individual, to pull them in.

This is strikingly similar to Norma's account as head girl in the last chapter. Dorothy used a sign to describe this process:

> You need to use 'TAP-TAP', tell one or two people what you wanted to achieve, and then each would go out from there, tap-tapping the others, drawing them in based on knowing their individual ways, and that would do it. We'd get a large turnout, whereas 'FLASH-LIGHTS' would get a poor turnout.

Albert, however, felt that this strategy was also used by the other group, but from my own observations and the data from other respondents the 'word of hand' method continues to achieve a greater degree of collective activity without the disadvantage of a few people being identified as leaders and thus vulnerable to personality clashes.

6. Class Differences, Deafness and Deafhood

As noted above, the term 'Deaf' was used by both groups to designate the working-class Deaf group. When I pointed it out to Dorothy, she was surprised; it was so habitual as to have escaped her notice. I asked her to tell me more, and she replied:

> I feel they are truly Deaf because they are strong in saying 'I do things my own way'. Sign strongly, in public sign openly, gather at the lampost, challenge hearing on the buses and other places. If the police can't sign, they will say to them 'You don't sign? Stupid, you'. All these positives accumulate to make up a strong Deaf pride.

Thus, the 1001 victories / strategies working-class Deaf group used to negotiate their environment, reflect a belief that 'Deaf' people are those who hold fast to their Deafhood, their own cultural values in their dealings with the majority culture of the 'hearing world'. This standing firm in situations is the more impressive when one considers how at times this would create even more conflict and open themselves to more scorn, in a world in which plenty of ridicule and discrimination was already directed their way.

The above links to a deeper cultural value within Deafhood. Dorothy's bus journey example above, when she pointed out that the middle-class Deaf would avoid such conflict, holds what she feels is the key to it all:

> And so, [because they didn't challenge the hearing], by the end of the journey, *hearing would have learned nothing. Still wouldn't have learned to respect Deaf.*

Thus an individual event of this kind becomes *an act that is carried out, in part, on behalf of the whole group.* One can thus glimpse a world in which a whole group of people, standing firm within their 'Deaf self', asserting their rights at work and in other places, entering into conflict with hearing people in public, are actually engaged in the task of day-by-day, person by person, drop by drop, *attempting to make their world a better place for Deaf people to inhabit.* Some of the benefits will rub off on the

individual involved in each of those situations. But many of these activities must by definition be 'cast to the winds', in the hope or belief that the gain will not be their own, but other Deaf people's, including of course the middle-class Deaf.

This collectivist philosophy contrasts with the middle-class concern which was based on a more individualistic philosophy, where the prime concern was their own comfort or welfare, and where taking chances on behalf of the Deaf collectivity appears to have been avoided. Dorothy took the analysis deeper:

> The hearing [ie the middle class Deaf!] ... yes they Deaf, but we can tell they have Hearing attitudes; can't call them 'Deaf' because they're already swaying back and forth, trying to balance on a tightrope between two worlds. They won't jump on the Deaf side; they always trying desperately to pull themselves towards falling on the Hearing side.

This BSL passage is rich in metaphor, and difficult to do justice to in translation, but includes an acknowledgment that, despite the struggle to pull onesself away from falling on the Deaf side, it is impossible to fall on the Hearing side - they will always be Deaf in the sense of being unable to hear and participate in the hearing world. Consequently their lives involve a psychological condition of perpetual tension and internal struggle. It is this *self-division* which may go some way to explaining the difference Albert noted between their hearing siblings and themselves.

Dorothy confirmed the analysis above by making an explicit link with culture:

> The middle-class got nothing to say, nothing to look back on, because they always value hearing things, bow down to them ... so *got nothing inside of themselves.* Working-class don't care what hearing think of them, so in the end got rich culture.

This working-class appreciation of their Deafhood could not have come easy. 'Not caring' what hearing people thought may well have come at a price, involving strategies which helped them to deal with any pain from being so universally looked down upon.

Likewise, the sign 'not bad / can't help it' tells us several crucial things about Deaf

culture in earlier times. As used by Deaf people in the study, it contains a wide range of linguistic 'affect', from mockery, anger and contempt through neutrality to sympathy and sorrow. The working-class Deaf's compassion for the others' loss of their former 'Deaf' state was understood only too well; the temptations to give in to the constant pressures of the majority culture to define onesself within its cultural expectations, when Deaf people's own self-definition was so scorned, and (even now) so misunderstood. The use of this sign contains both an analysis of how things came to be the way they were, and a route by which the 'underdog' group could rise above their frustrations with the others to maintain community unity. As Dorothy summarised:

> You see, the point is that in those days, unlike today, there was no envy or craving like 'Oh they lucky, they rich'. It was more like 'Me have job, family, Deaf club, what-for complain? We happy. Are they *really* happy?'

6.6 CULTURAL UNITY

We have noted that although there are similarities with class patterns found in UK majority culture, a crucial difference is that Deaf people have to find ways to live with each other and make their culture cohere, and the accounts above indicate some strategies. Albert waxed eloquent on the extent to which cultural unity was achieved:

> ... at that time, the joy was that people actually worked *together.* Very much like a village... We had people that didn't like each other, but to survive, had to be together and find ways of living and working together ... it was very much an extended family... And I still feel very warm when I think about what happened when I was a child. I don't think I've felt anywhere else so fully and totally accepted as a person as there ... and I think that's what we're possibly losing now [with the advent of mainstreaming and the closure of Deaf schools].

We shall return to the 'village' theme later. Elsewhere Albert refers to the fact that any adult could discipline any child, and that he called several of the other adults his 'aunts and uncles'. The 'family' trope is also very characteristic of Deaf club culture, as Frances commented:

> I think of the Deaf club as my home - it's where I grew up. And the people there are my family. But recently some of them have died - it's really broken my heart, because *they are part of me, you know.*

It was impossible to miss the extent to which Frances felt the italicised phrase to be literally true - the Deaf collective 'we' noted throughout the study implies an inter-connectedness of such depth, as Jade observed in the last chapter. Clara, a young Deaf woman from the North East, noted that these Deaf club traditions were still alive in some places in the present, and used the same image:

> They're a really tight group; if any one of them's ill, the others always come round and help them get better. If someone dies, absolutely all the Deaf go to the funeral ... [M] club is like one big family.

Unity as a superseding cultural value is thus manifested by this imagery. But there were other strategies by which this unity was maintained.

1. Sport as Unifying Activity

Dorothy earlier described how both sets of wives shared their work when hosting a visiting club. She became more explicit:

> With sport, both groups joined in well. The middle-class wives did what? Made the sandwiches. Working-class wives made the cakes. The middle class would then dress the cakes up, make them look beautiful. The Deaf [ie the working-class] were satisfied.

In giving the earlier example relating to preparing meals for the visiting club, she concluded:

> To me, what is important is that they worked together. That's why they were never in serious conflict, because there was that kind of co-operation there.

In respect of the men's own strategies, she gave several examples, including this:

> Cricket was the best mixed sport ... the middle class were good at it; the working class - some would play if they were good at it ... the rest of the working class would go to cricket because they wanted to support their club. So then the middle class would do the same at football, *once they saw the others make the first move*... This would keep us all together.

Albert added:

> Actually, sport overcame some of the age barriers as well... You would find the older men particularly would talk to the younger men on an equal level about sport. The younger ones played football, the older ones remembered when they played football!

Frances explained how this became true across genders as well:

> We set up a women's team - football - and slowly the men began to support us. We'd go training with them, and then when we travelled to other matches, they would all come, and then then they saw us drinking after the match - hee hee, they never saw us drink at the club, only cups of tea!... We were champions five years in a row. That helped change their attitudes too.

The reciprocity that sporting activities fostered was cited in much more detail, but the examples here serve to sketch a basic outline.

2. Club Outings as Unifying Activity

Albert gave a detailed account of how this process operated:

> Then you had your trips. Mother-father and I and the rest would go off to Blackpool, or Chester, or wherever, and those were special times too because rather than just having four or five hours in the club, for a whole day you would be talking to people and you got to know each other much better. And sometimes those who were isolated in the club, nobody was isolated on the bus, because you would be sat next to someone and talking away to them, and so on. And they would join the group when they walked around the place.

Frances cited another type of bonding situation:

> We'd all go on holidays together. BDDA ... every year, on the coach. HMFD, they would go too, so we all grew up the same way.

As with sporting activities, these offered single Deaf men and women the opportunity to meet others in different towns, and form friendships, relationships, or marriages.

3. National Deaf Consciousness as Local Unifier

A cultural trait particular to Deaf community life is the national orientation of its consciousness. The trips to other clubs and participation in regional or national social and sporting events created a sense of Deaf nationhood which helped to create a larger Deaf identity, which in turn reinforced unity at the local level. Albert talked about the amount of national experience he had at a young age as outstripping that of his hearing peers:

> My father took me all the round the country, and he would meet friends that perhaps he went to school with ... and we'd be there for hours talking about the old days... If it was a friend he'd met through sport, then you would watch the bond strengthening each time; it was really lovely to watch.

An important point to note here is that schools formed a first 'band' of friendships, which were then augmented by those formed at the club when people left school and went back to their native towns. Later for a variety of different reasons, they moved to different parts of the country, and formed further bands. Thus the basic framework for nationwide contact was set in place. Albert explained this with precision, although the translation doesn't do justice to the richness of the description:

> [S]'s mother went to the same school as my mother, so if she went to [L] and they met up, they'd be talking about the school, and then they'd be introduced to somebody else who would in turn introduce them to somebody and so on in ever widening circles, until over time that process would bring them all close together, bring them all in / back home... You must remember as well that the schools' numbers in those

> days were enormous; so the chances of meeting someone from your school were very high.

The previous chapter illustrated how this national Deaf consciousness originated to some extent in the wide school catchment systems.

Another important national cultural site was the monthly 'Around the Country' section of the national Deaf publications, often cited as the most popular section because almost everybody had an interest in other clubs and knew the names which cropped up in each section. Even today the BDNews contains those sections as well as birth, death and marriage announcements - a 'village'-type cultural manifestation in a national magazine.

4. Reciprocity and 'Deaf-Gelt'

Another crucial unifying strategy was the cultural belief that all skills possessed by individuals had to be shared. Dorothy has already described the ways that these skills were used to maintain the club building, and how English skills were also shared. Albert elaborated with other examples:

> For example, if there was a silversmith ... and you had a chain that was broken, you would bring that into the club and ask them if they might repair it for you. And always at the end you would say 'And I'll pay you' ... knowing there would be a reduction in price, based on friendship or whatever.

It is significant that both classes appeared to concur with this cultural norm.

5. Language and Humour as Unifiers

A crucial aspect of Deaf culture difficult to explicate briefly is the power inherent within sign language itself. Albert gave three examples:

> If you think of a group of people who've known each other for years, that have had their rows, and still stayed together, and there's still warmth and affection there; when they meet, if something funny has

> happened during the week, they'd tell people, *and then you'd get additions to the stories, and additions, and additions.*

By this he means that different people would embellish the story with a signed flourish, so that by the end it became a group-created story. He also explicitly drew a comparison with spoken language equivalents:

> If somebody saw something happening at work, now on the face of it [in speech] it doesn't look funny; but *when they sign it, it actually becomes funny.*

Clara gave a similar example:

> So much Deaf humour is in the signs, like [signs 'the dog lifted its leg against the wall'] ... but hearing, if you said that in English it wouldn't be funny... If you try to interpret the joke to hearing people, they would just give you a funny look, whilst Deaf would be crying with laughter.

Martha, a middle-aged woman from a Deaf family also explicity rejected the idea that Deaf people's passion for interaction was solely due to the isolation that would be felt after going from the club back into an alien society:

> There's a positive aspect to our culture that's being missed, and it has to do with language. There's something primally powerful about it, the way it engages all of our bodies and faces, its scope for storytelling, jokes and fun. I think anyone would be hooked if they had access to such intense communication experience.

Sally, a middle-aged woman, extended this physical / biological dimension:

> People go on about how deafness is a visual experience. But there's more... We're also tactile - we feel vibrations, don't we? We stamp on the floor, band tables for attention, hug each other more than hearing, and so on. And we feel vibrations of things happening around, people's movements and lots more. We are rooted to the earth! We draw it up from the ground into our bodies and out through our arms and faces and hands. It's all part of one thing, a sense of physical wholeness that links to our minds and hearts and is expressed in our language. It's about aliveness, feeling really alive, and all parts of us being engaged in that

aliveness.

Albert also remarked on the extent to which this total involvement affected the passing of time:

> Have you ever noticed how clock time loses its dimension when Deaf are signing? Something happens to time somewhere in there - it's just conceived of, it just happens in a different way than at other [hearing] times.

Whilst several others drew attention to the importance of humour as a unifier, Albert's summary was the most concise:

> There's an awful lot of teasing in Deaf culture, but it's warm, always warm... A person's characteristics are well known to all of those people ... my mother was a little bit snobby, so they called her Lady [W]... People would tease her about it, about wearing her pearls and so on... And she *loved* it, loved to be teased. She would laugh and laugh about it with them for hours and hours.

He told similar stories about his father and others, but the significance of this story is that it indicate how it was possible to use teasing across group / class boundaries to deflate in a nice way the very characteristics that caused friction in other situations. Moreover, as the story recounts, such teasing was actively welcomed as a sign of being included. Similar stories are widespread today - it remains one of the characteristics that struck the hearing people I spoke with most forcefully.

6. Summary

These are but some of the previously unrecorded features which enable class differences to be transcended and unity to be established. Others which were taken as read between the informants and myself include the 'obvious' ones of the kinship felt from shared Deaf identity, the necessity for unity in the face of a hostile world, and the bonds formed by shared cultural activity over time. Finally, these socio-cultural patterns above were thought to have broken down by 1970; Dorothy and others had difficulty in

analysing them after that time.

6.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND KEY POINTS

Space does not allow for in-depth comparison with the modern day community, so conclusions in that respect are premature. Nevertheless, we are able to sense the importance of a diachronic perspective in defining Deaf culture.

These responses brought to the surface for the first time the role of class differences within Deaf culture, though it is too early to conclude whether 'class' is the most appropriate framework for this experience. Although the petit-bourgois concept seems in some ways more useful, there remains the important difference that the equivalent hearing group does not experience anywhere like the same degree of oppression and control from above.

A similar dynamic means that the term 'elite subaltern' may not yet be appropriate, for any privileges gained by this group were slight compared to the extent that they were still viewed as lowly people by both missioners and lay people. The only ones who might come into this category were the handful described by Dorothy and others as being involved with the BDDA or its sporting equivalent, the BDSC.

Even more significantly, there appear strong connections between class attitudes and Deafhood. This also indicates that Deafhood is something that has to be *actualised* for the majority with hearing parents via numerous strategies, including how they conduct themselves both in and out of Deaf social groups. In Deaf families that actualisation is produced partly in the *acculturation* process of 'normal' family life.

Nevertheless, the existence of this elite subaltern group indicates that this whole complex set of relationships within the Deaf discourse system needs to be accomodated within a model of Deaf culture.

Having established some of the fundamental dynamics within the two traditional sites of Deaf culture, we can now look at how these have been manifested in later eras.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUBALTERN REBELS AND DEAFHOOD -

THE NATIONAL DIMENSION

Chapters 5 and 6 illustrate the magnitude of the task faced by those who might wish to see a larger sense of self and Deafhood develop, from the patterns characterised by covert resistance and '1001 Victories' to ones which could encompass more overt forms of expression. This chapter traces some attempts to achieve this from the late-missioner era to the present day, and illustrates how the cultural patterns of the earlier eras still inform the contemporay situation in its first 'post-colonial' phase. In doing so, it examines club-level cultural patterns, then illustrates how these were extended to the national-level.

Although the data collected by the study ranged widely across other themes of importance to Deafhood, some of which were more purely 'internal' cultural features, such as differences of opinion between groups of Deaf people over how one should conduct onesself in relation to Deafhood, or the pressures on Deaf families to take responsibility for a entire community, these would require considerable space to do justice to them all. I have chosen therefore to focus on the more 'oppositional' aspects of the culture. In doing so, I run the risk of implying that Deaf culture has developed in reaction to 'hearing' culture rather than being a 'pure' culture in its own right.

However, it is altogether too early to draw conclusions in either direction. Clearly, as we have seen, Deaf children and adults have developed a strong sense of 'us', which is necessarily predicated on a very real awareness of 'them'. Both the review and the data hint at a less oppositional past prior to Oralism, but that history being largely lost, it is understandable that there is little awareness that perhaps the colonialists were not typical of hearing people as a whole, so that throughout the period of study, all my observations and data were steeped in an intense climate of 'them versus us'.

As the chapter proceeds, it becomes clear that those in overt rebellion could only clear a space for cultural development by confronting the 'hearingness' of what they faced; having done so, it remained for that space or void to be filled by the development of new cultural forms. A major factor in developing confidence for confrontation, as will be shown, was contact with lay people in specific domains which enabled some Deaf subalterns to see beyond the boundaries imposed by their colonialist upbringing.

7.1 DEAFHOOD AND LEARNING FROM ELDERS

Although Oralism did much damage to Deaf school-leavers, they still retained the potential for Deafhood development. As Ray put it:

> Deaf people in their young days ... were controlled, meaning that the Hearing Mentality was imposed on them ... but because Oralism could not get through to them fully, since fundamentally they couldn't communicate with them! ... there was a grey area between what was Deaf and what was Hearing.

Within this grey area, young Deaf people's first sustained contacts with Deaf adults were of great importance in shaping their future path. Ray's accounts of those Deaf elders who inspired him were the most extensive accounts collected, but his experiences parallelled some of the other Deaf respondents. Here he talked of John M, whom we met in Chapter 6:

> I went into the Deaf club; he was the first person to meet me. My mind was blown! No mouthing, just fingerspelling! It was like running into a brick wall!... Well I knew the ABC of course, but *that*?! So I went home and practiced in front of a mirror ... in the bedroom where nobody was watching! Passages from my works of Shakespeare, for a full week. Then I met him again... Fascinating. Truly dumb, but his English, brilliant!

The 'culture shock' manifested in the reactions to the fingerspelling skill of the older Deaf people who were educated prior to the complete oralist takeover, is typical of the experiences of many Deaf school-leavers. One thing immediately struck him:

> Those old Deaf people are living evidence that... Oralism is wrong *on its own terms*. Many that I met would write things down in public - that fluent English there, where has it come from, then?!!

He went on to give examples of how the old regarded the younger ones brought up on Oralism:

> They'd say that one of the greatest books ever written was, what? The English dictionary! They'd say 'these younger Deaf, they need pictures, like a rabbit bouncing along across the page, whatfor?! All I could say was 'Oh'.... I thought that was an amazing thing to say!

The dictionary, of course, is a marker of the intense study the older Deaf undertook in order to unravel the mysteries of the English language. In other places it has been descibed as their Bible, and it constitutes a manifestation of the 1001 Victories principle in a tangible physical form. Ray added that: 'Me, I thought I went to a better school. But I tell you, I never saw Deaf people write like that there'. In other words, the 'average' Deaf school before Oralism achieved better English than the supposed cream of the oralist crop. Whether true or not, this view is widely held. He gave examples of the kind of interaction between the generations amongst a similar group in Edinburgh:

> They would keep trying to put the young Deaf right. They'd say things like 'Him sent off, whatfor?' 'Kicking'. The old would intervene and say 'No ... for tripping; they're different things'. 'Kick, same'. 'Ah, no, no', and they'd explain.

Sean, a young Irishman described how the example of elders extended into dealings with lay people. His ephiphany came in a shop queue:

> There was me, trying to use my voice, and all the time the queue behind me was getting longer, [because the shokeeper could not understand his voice], and I felt so ashamed. But this old Deaf man, he just stepped in and wrote down what I wanted, and the shop wrote down the price, and that was it - done in a flash. I'll never forget what that taught me about *true* Deaf dignity and pride.

He realised that using his voice to make unintelligible noises was grotesque by comparison with the simple dignity of writing; the old Deaf even carried special notebooks for that purpose. It is indicative of the degree of brainwashing that prevented him and others working this out for themselves, although lack of confidence in English undoubtedly played its part. His choice of words also indicates a knowledge deeply buried inside him that there actually *was* a 'true Deaf way', despite all he had been taught.

It should not be assumed that the old people's sense of Deafhood gave them total self-confidence. Ray gave a moving example of watching an old Deaf man conduct an interchange with the railway ticket office, writing 'Please may I have the correct fare to London, King's Cross'. He noted that:

> That word 'may'. It's a permission word... It gave me the realisation that inside there was inferiority, that he was still one of the Little People [see last chapter]. But the English was still really smooth, and his example inspired me.

He continued:

> Now those Little People are brave. They are aware that a lot of hearing people can't read. *But they don't know which ones*!! They have to stick their neck out, take a chance, every day of their lives < acts out example with Chaplinesque overtones > .

This example is especially significance in eras when hearing illiteracy was comparatively high, for the old man's writing shows his English register to be quite formal.

It must have been a bitter blow to young Deaf self-confidence to realise the system they had endured not only had not always been the norm, but that something better had actually once existed. Furthermore, since their educational day had now come and gone, there was little prospect of achieving the literacy their elders possessed.

Some more determined souls did make their own efforts. James, in his fifties from the

North-West, had a good command of written English, and explained how he patiently taught himself to read and write after leaving school:

> I would use the Daily Express and the dictionary, and slowly build it up from there, until I could read all those political type books. It took 12 years to get to the basic level, then I could build on that. I would also meet hearing people in pubs and political meetings, and we would write back and forth, and so I slowly managed to make sense of it all; how there was *another* hearing world under the surface of the one we were made to focus on!

James was of course in a minority, but the sense he gives of a lifetime's struggle informs our picture of what other Deaf people had to do. Michael, in his forties, gave a similar example of a self-taught Deaf man:

> He taught himself English, not only from books, but from these written conversations with hearing people. It was dealing with hearing people, mostly in pubs, that actually improved his English, and built his strong Deaf identity, and now he has his own business with hearing actually under him!

We shall return to the significance of 'hearing people and pubs' later, but one other theme is significant:

> Interesting - the older Deaf still left alive say they don't need interpreters! They say 'Me fine with writing with hearing - not need anybody's help!'

Ray summarised the sense of history implied in these cross-generational accounts in a resonant metaphor:

> Sign languages are far better than Deaf people themselves; they live on after individuals die. When those old people signed, whew! Ghosts danced on their hands!

This example echoes the pre-oralist sense of sign language being the ultimate gift to posterity, since Deaf generations come and go, but a meta-concept, 'Sign' remains.

This dimension was encapsulated by Millie, a Scottish Deaf woman in her eighties:

> When I watch Deaf from around the country all signing together with their different dialects, or Deaf people from around the world doing the same, I say to myself, 'Thank God for this gift He has given us - our beautiful language, our hands'. (Baillie, 1998)

She also indicated that this was a theme within Deaf church in past eras. It is worth noting that her joy was founded on two themes - the multiplicity of signs for the same concept, and the unity that Deaf people could create by communicating across those linguistic boundaries - *e pluribus unum*. It was clear that this meta-concept was either part of a Deaf spirituality or a manifestation of the human spiritual impulse - it is too early to decide.

The data also indicated a beginning to the process of understanding the transmission of other beliefs, morals and attitudes. John M taught Roy other lessons:

> He gave me some good advice... 'Decide for yourself. If you think something is right, don't let others influence you. You can listen, but the decision lies with you. You're the one that has got to live your life'... *You could say a part of him lives on in me.*

This takes on greater significance in the context of all the pressures on Deaf people to follow majority society beliefs. The italicised phrase echoes what we have heard in earlier chapters about a 'primal' interconnectedness between Deaf people. Here Roy consciously embodies that experience; carrying forward the much-repressed values of one's ancestors is imbued with greater weight than in majority society.

Michael also recalled other contexts in which the old Deaf set examples:

> One Deaf friend, brought up orally and his English no good, went for a job, but he and the boss couldn't communicate. So the boss called in an old Deaf man who worked there and he became like an interpreter, but all done in writing, and my friend got the job!

Other situations of importance included old Deaf from Deaf families forming a linguistic bridge in clubs and meetings, between the old and the young who could not fingerspell fluently. Likewise:

> Remember, back then, Deaf had no information. No TV then; no access to radios. So it all had to be got from writing, whether newspapers or written conversations, and then passed on to others. Knowledge was like gold dust!

However, Michael identified how the importance of written media led to a reification of English, causing conflict:

> The old Deaf, they talked of becoming smart through English. Deaf my age trying to develop signs for new ideas - old didn't agree. They said 'You don't become smart through sign language. Focus on writing!

This observation is crucial. Although the old Deaf had not experienced Oralism, and did not reify English or denigrate sign in the way that oralists did, they nonetheless reified English (perhaps unconsciously) as a *practical* and 'Deaf-traditional' means of expression. This had consequences for the younger Deaf who sought to emulate them as will later be seen.

Roy met John M twice a week 'for years' to develop his awareness. His other mentor was [Dodds], a Deaf tramp; he gave a long account of the man and how his mind worked:

> He would encircle you, tying you up with questions... He was capable of making you believe that the Eiffel Tower was an optical illusion ... that the Queen Mary was a rowing boat. He was a master conversationalist, at the arts of debating, of pulling you in, point by point. And that's how I developed my way of talking to Deaf, to put something out and wait for the reply, step by step, question by question... He influenced me on how to keep their attention throughout. He died on the streets; no home.

Indeed, Roy is still known for his 'Socratic' style of conversation. In his interactions with Dodds, two of the above themes recur - the meetings took place in pubs all around the town, and Dodds mixed freely with hearing people there by written communication. A third theme was developed - Dodds rebelled against the missioner control and this cost him club friendships. The convergence of these themes is developed below.

7.2 REBELS AND REPRISALS

The new wave of young Deaf people, including those graduating from the grammar schools, entered the clubs in the early 1960s with positive expectations. However, those seeking to use their ideas to develop the clubs met with a shock. The first example here commences when 19 year old Ken is confronted by the missioner in an attempt to diminish his credibility with those he might influence. After some months of argument on a wide range of issues, he was challenged to come to the after-church social to debate the existence of God, Ken being an atheist himself. He went away and developed his most sophisticated arguments ready for the night. However:

> [Missioner] starts and says 'How do we know we've had a war? 1939-45. How do we know?' Deaf hands go up (like teacher and pupils!). 'From books'. 'Yes that's right'... and he went through several examples... 'Yes, that's right; it's recorded history. The Bible, [pause for effect] the same... That. It's fact'.

Ken had not reckoned on the missioner's cultural tactics of playing to the gallery:

> I thought, 'Oh God!' Because the Deaf were sitting there with their mouths wide open on the edge of their seats, tongues hanging out ... I thought 'You crafty bugger!' ... I was geared up for a Bertrand Russell type debate, or Thomas Paine ...

He had no choice but to attempt to match those tactics:

> Well I picked this book out of a box that was lying there. An Enid Blyton book. I said, 'Five children, one dog. This book true!' Deaf, - 'No, no, rubbish, rubbish, story. Made up'. 'No, true, look, History!'... [Dramatic pause, points to Bible] 'This one same. Made

up!'

Despite Ken's gallant attempts to match the missioner's use of cultural patterns, the struggle was unequal, with both misioner and the audience taking recourse in comments such as 'shame on you', 'blasphemy', and so on, at each turn. Translation does not do justice to the gallery-playing aspects, which were crucial if the threat of Ken to the missioner was to be quashed, (although his image was enhanced with a small younger group, as will be seen). The example also indicates, as Ken put it, 'their determination to prevent Deaf people from even learning how to think and debate'. Even more significantly, 'this missioner was more advanced than most of the others. He wasn't popular with them - "Whoah, you're going too far! Slow down!"'

If strategies like this didn't work, there were others, as Ray explained:

> Someone'd say 'let's have a bar here at the club. He'd foam at the mouth. 'Drink is Sin!' 'Say who?' 'Bible'. 'OK, I will ask Ray; he loves to read the Bible, to come.' So I went, and said 'OK, what book, chapter, verse?' 'You trying to be clever'. 'I am clever'. He couldn't show me anywhere! 'You're winding yourself up.' 'Right, you're banned!'

(Battles to obtain a club bar seem to have been a major site for subaltern challenges to the missioner ethos; one informant told me that not until 1967 did the first club, in Coventry, succeed.) Another tactic was to keep records on the 'troublemakers' to ensure later missioners continued the strategies. Dorothy explained:

> One new Principal Officer [ie the new breed of social worker] found in the files a secret blacklist. Slowly he met all the people on it, and realised we were rebels, and then called a meeting of those on it, and explained about the list. All my family's names were on there. Then he tore it up in front of us and threw it away. Why were we on there? Because we always argued with the missioner. The idea of the list was to warn the new missioner! Interesting; the one before him was horrible to me for no reason. I set up Girl Guides and everything, but he'd give me lots of problems with the minibus and so on. Now it's clear... It hurt so much 'cos father good in club ... my mother said he should be buried outside the club. He'd work for all the events, nick materials from work, make prayer stools for the bazaar. Missioner not interested

> in his good side. I never told my mother about this - it would destroy her.

Given the vital importance of the club to Deaf people, the ability to ban someone for disagreeing with the missioner carried immense resonance, which served to keep other less bold souls quiescent. However, for our purposes, the most significant aspect is that the missioner would use his (middle-class) committee to carry out some of his decisions. Importantly also, they would sometimes do this without being aware that this was the case - a clear demonstration of the process of hegemony. As Ray put it:

> If you disagreed with one of his boys, you disagreed with 75. If I told one of them he was wrong, the next Saturday night, the other 74 would come and argue with me. That's how it works.

Several informants gave in-depth examples of how this group enforced these decisions. Another strategy was for that committee to keep their power at all costs. As Albert explained:

> You look at the old committees; it's the same people on them again and again. Once they got there, they held onto it. They needed it, they really did. They had something, but what about all the others who had nothing? All the others who did their manual work, their carpentry, their sewing, they had no real power. And they were extremely bright people who couldn't give of it.

Ray gave detailed accounts of how attempts to develop the Deaf club were continually thwarted by such committees:

> They accused me of trying to disrupt the traditions of the club. Like Wednesday nights, church service. No one do anything except church. I organized snooker games that night - furious clashes. Snooker upstairs, church downstairs - no harm. Tradition! Noise of the balls! But they're all Deaf!! No, it was 'Vicar can't concentrate'. Committee voted it out. 'OK, Thursday then?' 'Nope, traditionally closed Thursdays'!!

It seemed that any activity which did not originate with the missioner or his group was prevented simply because it might enlarge the possibilities of what Deaf people might

aspire to, or give them sufficient confidence to 'rock the boat':

> Likewise trying to join the hearing darts league. Or to have a quiz night. Or a variety night, where Deaf could get up on stage and perform. *It would get put down as a hearing influence,* or vicar would say no. You couldn't get anywhere. That's why we gave up.

This negative ascription of the 'hearing = not proper Deaf person' dualism is here clearly used as a cultural weapon to maintain a tradition which the 20th century missioners may have shaped. Ken illustrated the way the missioner / Deaf network joined forces not only to bar club membership, but also to have them barred from as much Deaf life as they could influence:

> I got banned from a couple of clubs actually ... at some dance or other. The missioner, in front of a fair few people, actually, said 'Don't come back again - we don't want people like you here' - and he'd never met me before!

Ray told several lengthy stories with great gusto about being banned from similar events. Most of these bans were enforced by the middle-class group, who often utilised a more 'pedantic' one of their number whose habit was to sit at the door all night and demand to see membership cards. 'I don't know what fun they got out of clubs' remarked Ken. 'They spent all night with their backs turned to all the action!' Such behaviour patterns still seem to persist; I myself experienced it several times.

The importance of these examples is not to show 'Deaf versus hearing', but how classic colonialism meant setting Deaf against Deaf, especially where the newcomers wished to enlarge ideas of what being Deaf meant.

7.3 SUBALTERN REBELS AND 'DEAF PUB CULTURE'

For those who wished to create lives unrestricted by what could be done, said or even thought, the alternatives were few. Jim, an old Deaf rebel in his eighties summarised the dynamic:

> The missioners were surrounded by their group of Deaf syncophants, who would not challenge them... The few who were clever said 'Fuck 'em' and would go and meet and drink in the pub, and then get banned from the club because they drank!

Ken gave a similar example:

> We showed people we had the ideas and enthusiasm, but the Favoured Group didn't want to know and they would close ranks ... oh God, they were so powerful... So we ended up in the pub and were better off there too - you could mix with hearing people and do all sorts of things you wouldn't have been able to do in the club.

Several informants talked about the importance of the pub scene as not merely a social place, but as an alternative site for shaping and developing Deaf identities not defined by the cultural values of the missioner and his adherents. This information has never been printed before; indeed it is barely known, and is therefore of crucial importance in understanding the multi-sidedness of Deaf culture. It also begins to illustrate the extent to which the idea of what constitutes 'being Deaf' is itself a contested domain extending beyond the dualistic 'deafness versus hearingness' construct people have used hitherto.

It is also important to bear in mind the last chapter's emphasis on the risky enterprise of entering into 'hearing' territory. None of the informants went into 'middle-class' pubs - their terrain in some cases seemed to be among the roughest of pubs. Ray gave the North-Eastern example:

> The pub we went to was frequented by prostitutes, pimps, Irish navvies, the lowest of the low in [M]. Deaf loved that pub! They'd go in white shirt and tie and suit [laughs]. We'd have a laugh and mix with them all.

His detailed examples illustrated the degree of Deaf pride developed in holding one's own and being accepted as uncompromisingly Deaf people in such situations. Stefan, a Deaf man in his late forties was sceptical about the level of interaction in the pubs:

> Those who are satisfied with all that 'thumbs-up' stuff, being bought a drink out of sympathy, fine, but... Maybe they do have some written communication, but Deaf pride in that situation? I don't see how.

However Ray and others gave detailed accounts of how the relationships with hearing people were formed and what they entailed:

> Stefan is talking rubbish - what does he know? We would communicate at length in writing, as well as gestures, and of course some of them learned to fingerspell too. As well as all the rude crude talk, both sides would ask each other for advice. Like, good places to try for jobs, or health problems, or how to get a council house, or where to get the car repaired - why that garage and so on. Hearing respected us and asked us for advice too.

Such information-obtaining sessions were of course of great importance for those not wishing to have the missioner intervene in their own lives. Conversations went deeper too. Jim gave several examples from his lengthy repertoire of topics like politics, religion, and general 'saloon bar philosophising'.

The matter of respect in pubs was very important - winning over hearing people without trying to be anything other than Deaf was a matter of great pride, and numbers with the other 1001 Victories. One example of the process of winning over an intransigent individual was narrated by Ray:

> There was one guy who held out against us longer than his mates, big [Tom]. He would always mock our signing with the 'flap-flap' sign. One day he came in a bit quiet, came up to us and wrote a note, 'My baby born Deaf, what do I do?' We wrote 'Throw it in the Tyne'. 'No, what would you advise?' 'Bugger off'. So he went and talked with his gang, then he came back again. 'How educate you?' 'How educate *you* - we always wondered!' Anyway we took pity on him and wrote the address of our local Deaf school, and he bought us all drinks, and we never had problems with him again.

This is not to say that there were no fights. Roy described several which arose from the Deaf being mocked, and Albert also gave examples. It appears that many were resolved with greater respect for the Deaf thereafter (a similar pattern to the confrontations in

6.5.4). Indeed, one of Ray's stories involved the missioner turning up at the pub to harangue the Deaf and being not so gently ejected by these hearing acquaintances.

Around this alternative axis, Deaf ideas began to coalesce. As Ken put it:

> The Deaf pub culture was thriving, thriving all over the country. If you wanted to meet Deaf people with real ideas or enthusiasm, go to the pub! There was always one in every town... It's interesting to speculate what might have happened to the Deaf community if that Favoured Group / missioner attitude had been different.

Some Deaf activities actually began to be organised from the pub scene. Ken gave an extended example of a Deaf football team which were forced to site themselves at the pub, organise their own fundraising, and so on. This example had significance because not only did the club in question have a bar (so alcohol was not the issue), but they were the most successful local Deaf team for some time, winning Deaf national trophies, yet were still banned from the club. A further dimension of this tension is revealed in this comment:

> The missioner influenced the Deaf management committee to have a go at us; and this worried a few of the players because they still depended on him [for interpreting, employment assistance etc]. Those players from outside [town] weren't worried. But those inside actually had their social work service threatened.

That such services should be threatened with withdrawal because of disputes ostensibly over sporting matters indicates the extent to which professionalism could be disregarded. However, the example also illustrates the interplay between the middle-class and the missioner; it would be too professionally risky for the latter to make this threat, and it would be carried out by the Deaf on his behalf. Crucially, in order to achieve this, he had to convince the significant few that this was necessary.

Other more significant Deaf political developments from this axis will be examined in 7.4. Before moving on, we should note Dorothy's response to the pub scene:

> No, we didn't go off to the pub like that in our club. We stayed at the club and fought it out there.

There are a number of reasons why this might be. One includes Dorothy's own 6th generation Deafhood, which rooted her more strongly in the club, which was 'my home'. This contrasts with Ken and Ray, who both had hearing parents. Another is that both felt that the missioner / middle-class hold was, if anything, even stronger in the North of England, and that almost none of the working-class Deaf would seriously confront the system in the ways that they wanted them to, as they appear to have done in Dorothy's club. Moreover, at their young age, they were not yet ready to settle for a lifetime of 1001 Victories inside the club, and at this moment in historical time were finding enough younger Deaf who felt similarly, even if they were not willing to express it so overtly. Finally, coming from outside they may have been able to identify the 'shape' of the culture in a way that those inside it were too close to.

However, as Jim pointed out, groups of rebels existed during the first half of the century too. Some contented themselves with meeting in pubs and developing lives outside the missioner paradigm. Others later broke away and actually set up alternative clubs. Two examples were cited by the informants - one, in Liverpool, based itself within a hearing bowling club. (Albert and Ray's reactions to this were very different.) Another was set up in Gateshead, under the aegis of the Social Services, with 'between 150-200 members'. John M was chairman; Ray described his philosophy:

> [I] welcomed everyone. He didn't drink. But he didn't object to those who drink. He was non-authoritarian - he was kind and human... He could have gone to the other two clubs [in the area, and mission-controlled], ... but he didn't follow the line, he followed what he felt and who he was comfortable with.

However, breakaway clubs were the exception. Indeed, in London, four such clubs were actually formed by upwardly aspiring / Oral Deaf people who did not want to mix with subaltern Deaf people.

7.3.1 Deaf Pub Culture and Deafness / Deafhood

Harry was often in conflict with the rebels of his club:

> [Jackie] and me - always oppose each other, argue over the priests and nuns. I would try and defend them ... but afterwards always shook hands.

He perceived the conflicts very much in Deaf-hearing terms:

> Some Deaf, if [Jackie] showed up they would make faces ... he'd start saying 'Priest wrong'. He would spoil the community, confuse them. If he had information, *he got it from a hearing pub somewhere*. We'd say, 'stop all this confusing stuff' and eventually he would go.

Once again 'hearing influence' is cited as a justification for refuting his arguments, and indeed Jackie was more 'hard of hearing' than most. Nevertheless his idea of Deafhood included making further public demonstration of his Deaf status and allegiance. Ray remembered him:

> Oh, a lovely man!... I remember him at the Manchester oralist conference in 1985. He went off on his own to the airport and stood there with a placard saying 'Van Uden [noted oralist] Go Home'! And of course when they went to argue with him, he just went 'Deaf me', and of course they couldn't sign anyway. Imagine going into the heart of Hearing territory and doing that!

He responded to Harry's point about 'hearing' information:

> We Deaf who went to the pub, had conversations with hearing people, whether we developed our own ideas or adopted some of theirs, if we tried to bring those back to the Deaf club, they would *all* get labelled as 'hearing ideas' and dismissed. *To me, they were the ones who had the hearing mentality!* It was implanted with Oralism, obeying the hearing teachers, the hearing system, and then they left school and came under the hearing missioner and followed *his* hearing system!... If you think about it, they [missioners] would let Deaf do this or that, kind of give them the 'lease' of things. But the 'freehold', ah, they would keep that to themselves!

This passage is extremely important. Clearly there are two polarised views on what constituted Deafhood, suggesting that after Milan, (and maybe even before it), Deaf culture absorbed colonialist values *which then became internalised as Deaf cultural values*. By going out into the hearing world and still retaining their Deaf identity, Jim, Ray, Ken and others contested this definition of 'Deaf'. Their own definitions were constructed similarly to Dorothy's, around the Deaf working-class / subaltern and their uncompromising interactions with the hearing world. However, they were carried one step further, actually constructing meaningful ongoing dialogues with that world, taking the '1001 Victories' to another level, by *converting those 'Hearing' ideas into potential Deaf cultural ways of the future,* and expanding the idea of what 'Deaf' could mean.

Before changes could be achieved, the hegemony willingly adopted by the 'Favoured Group' had to be transformed; Ray developed another set of imagery to emphasise this:

> The Deaf are like ... a man says to them, 'here, you're in this room at the moment. But if you go outside that door, you'll find there's a wonderful life; you'll be the richer for it'. And they say, 'But I'm happy with this room; it took me years to build this environment to suit myself. I'm frightened to go outside that door - what might be there?' So what do you find? A dead skeleton in that room! ... or they bang on the door, so the guard gives them some paint to do the room up with, or a TV [plays with images further]... But they're still within that cell of Hearing Mentality. And you can't release them because [dramatic pause] ... they locked *themselves* in!

Ken's own images were similar, using phrases like 'mental prison'; it is interesting to note that both located culture and change primarily within a mentalist construct. It is also notable that the contestation of what Deafhood / Deaf Mentality was or 'should be' about originates from a similar mentalist place, and is important because the issue is still very central today.

7.4 'MIDDLE-CLASS' DEAF, DEAFNESS AND DEAFHOOD - THE NATIONAL PICTURE

These readings of Deaf club cultural and political life take on greater importance when it is realised that they also applied to regional and national life.

1. Deaf National Sporting Culture

Although Dorothy described the missioner as chairing all Deaf sporting committees, often the sport groups were able to run their affairs the way they wanted to. Unlike social committee activities, which affected everything which went on on a day-to-day basis in the club, sports were more `externally' conducted. Consequently, who they played against, when and where they played, who they mixed with, and the values that were used to operate, facilitate and develop these activities was left more in Deaf hands. In some clubs, as Albert described, the missioner would operate even more of a hands-off policy, whilst in others, the Deaf would fight for as much autonomy as they could get, which, unless it had an obvious effect on the club power structure, could more easily be granted.

Thus the working-class Deaf had more control of the local and regional Deaf sporting activities and organisations which grew up in the early 20th century. Dorothy gave an in depth account, including this summary of her own regional body:

> The SDDASA brought the two classes together more because it covered a range of sports... Before that each group went more 'alone' to their own sports. For SDDASA, the middle-class 'forced themselves to go' [to our events]. So their [regional] committee was more mixed. And our club started to have officers there, rather than just reps - that was a big step ... and these officers were our club's working-class.

However, in the early 1950s, the British Deaf Sports Council (BDSC) was set up. Albert explained the significance of this:

> See, really missioners ... wouldn't *manage* sport. So there was a whole

> *huge* shift when the BDSC was formed... Ooh, I can remember father coming back from ... the first meeting - he'd gone as a delegate. He was furious; absolutely furious!... Because these two [missioners' names] were running it and manipulating it and making decisions and so on.

Thus by establishing the BDSC, Deaf sporting events previously run by working-class Deaf people came under the control of the missioners and thus their Favoured Groups, as Ken confirmed:

> The interesting thing was that at regional and national level, the whole set up was very similar to clubs ... the only people who stood any chance then were the Favoured Group ... it was remarkable how many good people there were ... with so much to contribute, but of course they disagreed with the views of the top people, so they couldn't get in... Some went off and set up alternative competitions, but a lot just gave up and quit. It was so stupid, such a waste.

Once some of those middle-class / petit bourgeois individuals who we previously identified as still being subalterns went on to regional and national power, they arguably formed a subaltern elite along with those who gained similar power in the BDDA. This elite is a different one from that of the present day, and comparisons between them would be a very productive direction for future research.

Within Ken's observations is the tacit awareness that Deaf sport was one of the very few avenues for self-expression, organisational skills and creativity in a colonised community. Dorothy recounted her local experience:

> Only one of our club was in the BDSC... Middle-class but heart-for-sport. He tried to involve Deaf in BDSC, but they'd go 'No way!. Didn't like him; he liked attention. His way of telling all about BDSC meetings was like 'I went all the way to London, then I went to this tube station, then that famous landmark, looking for the meeting place. Deaf would go 'Bo-oring. Get to the point'.

This example is interesting considering the strength of storytelling as a Deaf cultural feature - clearly there are boundaries in this domain where a perceived 'attitude' or

focus on onesself breached working-class Deaf cultural norms. She went on to describe how he tried again to gain their support:

> [G, a national BDSC Deaf figure then], strutted in, and was announced by his friend. Deaf went 'What for [this interruption via flashing the lights]? Then he spoke with an affected Signed English. So people turned away, and he got cross. 'Pay attention! Watch please.' 'The cheek of it', the Deaf said to each other. 'Bad'. I remember it all very clearly... You know Deaf, they mostly see one person from a group, they judge all the same, in terms of 'bad attitude'... So when this one came in, everybody realised 'Aha, BDSC are like *that* one'.

Apart from anything else, an imperious manner was not appropriate when speaking outside one's own club, and we have already seen how 'FLASH-LIGHTS' was identified as a non-subaltern strategy and thus counter-productive. Consequently:

> We'd travel far for SDDASA events, even the old people, raise money for them, but BDSC? No thank you. Even the tournament winners wouldn't go on to the BDSC finals. One group who did go, came back and said 'urgh, BDSC attitude problem'.

The concept of [bad] attitude is a very powerful and widespread trope in British Deaf culture, as befits a culture positioned to habitually receive it. Another cultural feature important in sporting dynamics was the question of how dissenting behaviour was actually conceived of. Dorothy summed this up - 'Their AGMs - all docile ... *criticism is seen as "rude".*' 'Rude' was the sign used in 6.4.2 to describe the middle-class reactions to the other group's information-getting strategies. It is clearly an important sign used in the hope of controlling behaviour which strayed from an unusually rigidly defined 'Deaf' model.

Ken's experience of the BDSC was very similar although he was determined to persevere. Beginning with managing the local Deaf football team and taking them to national success, he also managed a local hearing team - no mean feat for a totally Deaf person. The next step was to set up a regional Deaf league, which appears to have been the only one in the country at that time. None of this was well received by the Favoured hierarchy:

> Obviously that wasn't very helpful for them ... a man with 'undesirable' stamped on his forehead across the whole network, running a winning team... 'Can't have that, Deaf people doing well, tch tch'!

Clearly in this example, the middle class group appeared to prefer the status gained from colonisatin rather than be part of an egalitarian Deaf future, *even when it was successful.* The tension grew when his group went training at Lilleshall, and had the national cup final moved to a Football League ground. Their motives were clearly defined, and again reflected two different concepts of what 'Deaf' meant:

> The BDSC focus, money, and grants went on the international team. They should have gone on the rest of the Deaf in the country, encouraging them to develop.

Their definition of 'Deaf' was similar to Dorothy's, and centred around the value of collectivity and of raising the confidence and self-belief of the whole community. The other definition took a [hearing] nationalistic focus which supported an elite and chosen few. Ken's account contained much more detail of modes of resistance, but ultimately, his efforts came to naught:

> It was the proverbial brick wall. Plus any fighting back we did affected our region's players' chances of being picked for the national team. Plus, I had a family to support and the hearing team were even paying me. So in the end I left the Deaf world for 15 years... Then when I came back, blow me, that same lot were still there! And the Deaf were still doffing their caps to them, 'Yes sir, No sir'. 15 years and no change! Imagine that!

Thus subaltern Deaf control of their national and regional sporting activities was usurped in the early 1950s. The situation is still very similar today.

2. Deaf National Political Culture

The BDDA was established in 1890 partly to protect Deaf adults and children's rights against the advancing oralists. From the beginning, the missioners and the Deaf

(usually Deaf missioners or teachers) shared the key posts, but as the 20th century advanced and Deaf confidence and literacy declined, the hearing missioners gained control of the organisation. The colonial paradigm of the Deaf clubs began to expand to embrace national Deaf political culture. As Ken put it:

> [names people] were running the BDDA, and it was like a *glorified Deaf club*, with the chief focus on old folks' trips and holidays, and bingo and so on!

We heard earlier from Florence of the positive consequences of the BDDA's work in maintaining structures which promoted a national Deaf social life. The rebels' objections were not to that per se; rather to this being deemed all that was permissable. Roy also extended his 'Hearing Mentality' metaphor to the national scene:

> Like I said, it started in the schools, then on to the clubs. Then when they got to the BDDA level, they joined the other generations of Deaf with the same mentality ... BDDA was really run by hearing - the Deaf were only like the nodding dogs you see in the back of the car. Every congress you'd see the sea of heads nodding in time with each other!

Albert had considerable experience of the BDA, and he described one of the strategies used to manipulate Deaf people which in turn set them up to manipulate others:

> See, if you want to stop people thinking in depth, you give them small things that they can make decisions on. And you keep them focused on the procedures, so that your real in-depth decisions are kept away from them... Say you were organising a BDA Congress ... you would ask the Exec to make decisions about festivities in the evening, to decide if they wanted a magician or a dance... Very easy to get them feeling like they've made important decisions ... whilst you go ahead and make the big decisions without them.

The example confirms the cultural parallel; 'a magician or a dance' could apply as easily to the Deaf club party as easily as to the BDA Congress - and the Favoured Group understood this very well. As Ken put it, 'They knew exactly which buttons to press'.

Dorothy's experience was interesting, as she moved from being anti-BDDA to a prominent member of it. The stages she describes are of great cultural relevance:

> The upper group ... want nice orderly formal meeting - all must sit down quietly, like in church with themselves as vicar! They don't know how to engage the Deaf. That's why we all laughed at BDDA - I was one too... Later father start go BDDA - said 'not/bad'. See that sign again, 'not bad'? 'Cos father not like being suppressed! For example he'd say BDDA holidays 'not bad'. I knew what that meant, so I wouldn't go!

In fact she did not join until after the mini revolution inside the BDA in the early 1980s:

> When I realised BDA has politics now, I got interested. I wanted to see the doors flung wide open so Deaf can have own rights, own say.

Once she joined the local, then regional committee, she began to experience the typical cultural reactions of the middle-class group:

> They [regional council] didn't welcome me ... they kept telling me, 'If you're busy, you don't have to bother to come!!'... Then they wouldn't send me the minutes ... at the next election there were three of us, so we could fight back. But it was same kind of shutting out in BDA as we found in BDSC.

On the National Executive, by then almost all Deaf, but still from the Favoured Group, she experienced how culture clash could also be engineered for political ends:

> We had a Deaf Chair now, but he knew all the missioner's tricks. I would jump in and say what I wanted, but he and others insisted that we had to put our hands up as it was the Hearing, proper way to run Important Meetings at this level. So that made it hard to challenge things because there were many more of them than us and they [took the heat out of any challenge by all speaking in reply], even if they just repeated what the last person said.

She imitated their sense of self-importance, adding 'Ooh I didn't like how they talked about Deaf in the meetings'. Notable also was the Chair's cultural tone - expressed as reproof for using 'low Deaf' ways, a tactic which usually succeeded in daunting most

rebels, at least for a time. Nevertheless, she felt she remained undaunted. Undoubtedly, this was due in part to the new era and the changes that were being wrought generally - the tide was turning. But when I asked her what sustained her, she said:

> This is important question. When I'm there, I think of grass roots - what would they think of this or that issue. I felt strong to stand up to the others because I knew Deaf had voted me there to do the things they believed in.

The importance of the BDDA is that it is not just an abstract political entity, but the one organisation with the most power and potential for transforming Deaf culture, not least because its branches extended into virtually every club in the UK and also facilitated a strong socialising network via its rallies and holidays. Were subaltern Deaf to gain control of it, they could initiate reforms intended to alter cultural patterns and perceptions.

Thus Dorothy's account represents a reformist strategy for re-asserting Deaf subaltern control of their colony. She continued to persevere - notably by using the TAP-TAP strategy described in Chapter 6 - her accounts of other strategies were also exremely enlightening - and was gradually joined by other Deaf rebels as a result of the different strategies they used and events they described in the next sections.

3. Deafhood and Deaf Political Culture - Subaltern Rebellions

(i) Earlier rebellions

There were limits to what subaltern rebellions within Deaf pub culture could achieve, partly because of the logistics of communicating with other like-minded groups. The telephone was inaccessible, travelling was difficult in eras before motorways (and even more so before subaltern access to cars). Use of the printed media was also problematic, as Jim explained:

> The only Deaf protest group between Milan and S.H.E.D [in the 1950s] was a French one protesting to the Germans over the dismantling of the

Epee statue in Versailles... The old clubs like Glasgow, Newcastle, Oldham etc kept nice records back then; the English was good and the handwriting was smart. This was 1880-1900. Then it started to decline because of Milan of course. By the 1930s and 40s it just wasn't the same - and after Ewing [major British oralist] came along, things got much much worse! We had the British Deaf Times, but we couldn't find Deaf people who could still write. It was left to the older people, David Edwards and George Donaldson and others to keep it going; but in the end there was only me left. These were the Dark Ages of the Deaf in Britain.

He went on to describe the genesis of SHED, (a mixture of 'pub' Deaf, Deaf missioners, and hearing people) and their battle for higher educational standards, saying 'It was thought that SHED's pressure gained recognition of grammar school status now held by the MHGS'. (This story is long and complex, and if researched would shed some interesting light on how a rebel movement ended up having their efforts diverted into supporting a major Oral school.) When I asked him to comment on the pub rebels in general, he added an important dimension to the picture:

> Most of them would just mouth off and complain, and do nothing. They had good ideas, but no confidence or courage to put them into action. At least the missioners did actually go out there and help Deaf people, for all their faults.

This gives a background against which to assess eventual subaltern action. Notable also is that, once English-literate Deaf people died out, control of Deaf magazines fell more easily into the missioners' hands; even the Favoured Group were unable to write well enough to control this outlet. Frank, a Deaf man from the North-West in his mid-fifties, described the outcome and its implications:

> I felt we needed a magazine for Deaf by Deaf. The others were hearing-written really, about the old people's trip, the church service and the nice harvest festival - they'd probably give that 4 pages!!... No debates on issues that affected everyone - nothing. I mean, hearing have things like the New Statesman... Look at people's situation - where could they turn to? And how could they contact others like them in different parts of the country? You didn't have motorways at that time. No telephone access either. And Deaf couldn't write English much any more.

He described the magazine he set up in 1959, how its name was significant, and how six copies were sent to each Deaf club secretary:

> I should have known better because of course, the missioner opened all mail addressed to the Deaf club secretary... Some missioners sent all six back to me, 'We won't offer that kind of thing to the Deaf club'! ... [famous BDDA missioner] was one who sent them back, so in the next issue I wrote 'Shades of fascism - ... let Deaf people decide if they want to read it or not!' and I sent him six more of the next issue. And I got a letter from someone saying 'How dare you criticise such a good man, has a heart-for-Deaf people'. I thought that said it all!... I got a few Deaf responses, but it just sank really.

Frank's efforts, as with the SHED group, illustrate the impossibility of the task facing subaltern Deaf rebel culture. (There may well have been other similarly short-lived attempts that we do not know about; Jim recalled a rebel Deaf sports magazine from the 1970s that also failed to take off.)

(ii) The Emergence of the NUD

As described in Chapter 2, the Deaf resurgence began with the emergence of the NUD in 1976. Ray and Jim both described how the organisation emerged. As Ray put it:

> By the mid seventies, some of us had had enough of the domination of the missioner and his blue-eyed boys, and we were also dying to put a stop to the oralists. So the NUD was born - in a pub, of course! If you look at who was involved with the NUD, they *nearly all came out of the Deaf pub culture*! And the Deaf people they attracted as members from around the country, many were outsiders in their own areas, like [Jackie].

He described what led the NUD to recruit Jim:

> Before I met him in 1975, I met some of the old guard who knew him. They said 'Oh him; he's a really *rude* man'. 'Why is he rude'. 'Well he calls us stupid.' Well, instantly I thought he must be an intelligent man! After that, I heard stories about him walking out of two or three BDDA meetings ... and as you know that was about the most radical gesture you could make in those days... So I knew he had all the ingredients the NUD needed, a strong Deaf Mentality, and the respect he

commanded from those the NUD needed to recruit, those with fire in their bellies.

The achievements of the NUD were described in Chapter 2; Ray gave some insights into the Deaf cultural dynamics that informed the organisation:

> I realised that picking strong individuals meant that they would clash with each other ... but I felt it would be dishonest of me not to, because each, even if I didn't like them, have a contribution to make. Did it work? In a funny kind of way, yes. Because although we lost potential members because of them, and even lost some of them because they were too hot-headed to agree on some things, without strong personalities, the NUD couldn't have survived all that pressure that was thrown at them.

He also described one of the major sources of cultural tension within the organisation:

> We on the committee wanted a direct action approach ... but Liz wanted committees and discussions. That's the Hearing mentality. We wanted to do it the Deaf way ... and to me, NUD was designed to have a short life - 10 or 15 years, get in there, change things, and then let the changes carry on the work.

These two examples give us the beginnings of deeper insights into subaltern rebel Deaf culture. The first is the desire to do things 'the Deaf Way', however that might be construed. In the second there was dissonance and conflict between the cultural values of Deaf collectivity, and the strong-minded individualism which developed as a necessary trait to resist colonial dominance. Exploration of these deeper levels is, however, beyond the scope of this study.

During my research, I was intrigued to note that many of the NUD's major figures placed great importance upon Deaf history. (Many of them are now active in the new British Deaf History Society.) Indeed as one person put it:

> They knew what they were doing when they chose Jim. He represents the last link to the strong Deaf going back to the last century who fought

> Milan, because he knew some of those people. So the younger Deaf rebels were attracted to him because something called them to seek out Deaf history and thus find the Golden Age when Deaf were strong and literate. He *helped them get in touch with that stronger, older Deaf self.*

This historical dimension gives us a new insight into the Deafhood and the Deaf self. As well as the debate about what constituted 'hearing ideas' above, it seems there is confirmation of the historical existence of that other set of 'Deaf ideas' about a larger Deaf self before the one designated for them by the Favoured Group. These 'Deaf ideas' have to do with reference to a period of historical time when literacy and pride in all things Deaf enabled rebellion to (theoretically) take place. It is too early to tell whether such a 'Golden Age' was illusory, but the Deaf response to Oralism described in Chapter 1 could not have taken place without considerable talent and effort being devoted to it.

Thus the idea of a 'Deaf' history in itself enlarged the vision of those who were touched by it, and strengthened their resolve to maintain the tradition in their own ways. In this respect, this tradition is the equivalent of Dorothy's six-generation Deaf heritage. One significant difference is that it appears none of the NUD had Deaf parents; as was earlier explained, Deaf families were reluctant to join the pub scene because their sense of cultural responsibilities and lifelong friendships within the Deaf club made it very difficult to turn their backs on their less courageous friends, whereas those from hearing families could more easily walk out and join the pub rebels or the NUD.

4. Effects of the NUD Subaltern Response

Frank described the next significant developments:

> Once the NUD turned things upside down, the BDA *had* to act, had to change. So when Verney [new hearing Chief Executive] came in ... and started to make it more of a campaigning organisation, that gave ordinary Deaf people their first big confidence boost. And the word got out so you had all these Deaf coming out of the (pub) woodwork, like Ken and [names others].

These changes were of course contested by the Favoured Group, who now became known as the 'Old Guard'. Ken noted how, on his return 15 years later, he was spotted coming up the path towards a BDSC meeting:

> One of those in the meeting told me afterwards that [notorious missioner] saw him coming, and turned to the meeting's [Deaf] chair and said 'Let me chair this meeting and deal with him. We mustn't give him a platform'.

He gave lengthy accounts of the struggles which were then renewed, and how the missioners and their Deaf 'stooges', as he called them, were outwitted by a sustained group effort in the North-West to set up their own BDSC region and thus gain the freedom to develop their own cultural activities and politics. (The details given reveal much about Deaf cultural practice, but in-depth description is beyond the scope of this study.) These examples indicate the wide range of strategies employed:

> First thing we did was set up training courses for Deaf - how to run a bar, how to fundraise, how to campaign ... we expanded the regional social rallies from 1-200 to 2,000 ... we had open debates, including oralist speakers for the Deaf to learn how to challenge them ....we developed regional sporting leagues and proper training ... we set up festivals of Deaf drama and comedy, so Deaf could finally start to think about *what being Deaf meant*, and did plays that took the piss out of the traditional Favoured Group idea of what Deaf plays should be like.

These examples all have in common the idea of empowering Deaf people to develop their larger, latent Deafhood selves (although space is insufficient to describe how Ken illustrated each example within Deaf cultural modes).

Frank described how the Old Guard removed Verney from his post, and how a momentous response from Deaf rebels and young hearing social workers culminated in a nationally organised Deaf rebellion which defeated them at the BDA Congress in Torquay in 1983. (Tthe cultural strategies employed appear similar to the ones Dorothy described in 6.5.5.) This remains the only actual known example of a UK Deaf rebellion, that is, a tangible, even successful insurrection. After this, the last missioners resigned as chair or committee members, the first ever Deaf chair was elected, Verney

was re-instated, and Deaf people were theoretically in charge of their own organisation.

In effect this meant that Favoured Group were finally in charge, but for the first time without any backup, whilst a handful of 'young Turks' (in their thirties themselves by then) snapped at their heels. Furthermore, since most of the senior paid staff were hearing liberals effectively of Verney's choosing, they represented a challenge to the Favoured Group because they were seen both as hearing radicals and as people who did not fully understand traditional Deaf cultural life. Likewise their liberalism was a challenge to members of the younger group who either thought that, as hearing people they should not be there, or that they would still not push Deaf demands with the urgency or into sufficiently high political domains to effect a difference.

The above closely parallels classic colonialism at the moment of handover. The cultural threads from those three different sources - missioners, pub rebels and social work liberals - have then proceeded to weave in and out, against and across, each other over the intervening 16 years.

7.5 THE CONTEMPORARY BDA AND DEAFHOOD ISSUES

Despite the resurgence described above, there were repeated comments that the missioner pattern still dominated culturally. Frank, observing recent BDA political activities, remarked:

> Even now, after all the changes we fought for and won, even though we have an all Deaf Executive Council, *the mentality* is still the same. They still run it the same way that they run their Deaf clubs - a national equivalent of bingo and whist drives!

Ray saw the old cultural paradigm as still very much alive:

> Those who were pub rebels before, now have become just like the old ones'. 'Ohh, that's right, that's proper, leave it alone, be careful, BDA right, Executive know'. Back to the old ways - suppression of other Deaf people.

He analysed how this came to be by linking it with the mentality planted back in oral school:

> When they reach a high or unaccustomed position, the Fear comes and their legs collapse under them. That 'leave it alone' attitude shows through and they turn it into fake outward pride and confidence. Because deep inside there's still the roots of Oralism that took away their real Deaf confidence, and when that's been taken away, they'll never get it back.

Frank found the external cultural manifestations to be very visible:

> You can still see the Favoured Group mentality now ... they are full of it, like they have All This Information they can't tell you about! That smug air ... you can actually pick them out just like that <snaps fingers>

It is perhaps uncoincidental that the trope of Information surfaces again, this time wielded to keep subalterns at bay and preserve their position. Ken gave the key explanation:

> You have to remember the BDA isn't like the RNID or something that is just another Welfare body. It's a cultural entity, made up of Deaf people and their attitudes, from generation to generation. And so it can only change slowly, as cultures change. The Deaf people who are now at the top of the BDA - they are the last wave of those who grew up with the missioners' attitudes planted inside them.

Albert concurred, adding:

> Take [BDA high official] for example. He grew up under the missioners - [one Deaf missioner] was his mentor when he was young. And this is true for all of them over 50 or so - the missioners' way must still be there inside them.

Ken described the effects of such cultural continuity:

You could see it at the last AGM - their disdain and distrust of their own membership. They are just reproducing the missioners' ethos and attitude. For example, they decided to have a new logo. Now that was a great opportunity to get the members involved and feel part of the BDA. But no, they were saying, 'Deaf can't do it. We must have a hearing professional to do it'. A simple thing like that! Let alone all the policies and major issues that need mass enthusiasm to carry off ... they want to be *accepted* by hearing people and the hearing establishment rather than fight for what Deaf people want ... it's very sad because it's very clear that at last Deaf people are ready to go ... but there's no leader ... ready to step up on that platform and inspire them, call them to arms.

The 'absence' of Deaf leaders is too complex a topic for this study, although plenty of useful data was generated around these themes.

One of Frank's explanations for the rebels' change in values is also significant in this context:

> Maybe they were OK when they joined, but then they changed to *fit in with the atmosphere* of the BDA.

This colloquial phrase hides the deeper meaning which, when extricated, indicates that the cultural mores, values, norms and behaviour of the 'deafness Years' absorbed or transmuted attempts to write subaltern Deafhood onto the pages of cultural history and into the community at large.

Unwillingness to confront hearing people, 'petit bourgeois' anxiety to be seen to be doing the right, respectable thing, and other Favoured Group patterns that were described in 6.4, all continued to dominate the cultural climate of national Deaf expression in two domains - outwardly towards the hearing power structure and inwardly to gain a hegemonic consensus for suppressing subaltern Deaf aspirations towards the larger image of Deafhood that history had indicated existed.

Indeed Dorothy, although devoting her energies over the next ten years to trying to change the BDA, concluded:

> My long fight to make sure BDA focuses on Deaf comes down to this. Remember father saying 'Not bad / can't help it'? Well, they *still* 'not bad / can't help it!

7.6 SUMMARY AND KEY POINTS OF DATA CHAPTERS

These accounts of the dynamics of cultural formation, maintenance and change, of subaltern and class differences, and of deafness / Deafhood conflict, are of crucial importance in understanding British Deaf culture in the present day. Far from being a nostalgic account of Deaf life at the turn of the century, the cultural patterns and ramifications are shown to be still in effect at the present time.

Chapter 2 described Deaf education as a conceptual battleground within which maintaining and enlarging the numbers of Deafschool children, their English literacy, and a larger sense of their Deafhood, affects the quality of the entire community's future Deaf cultural life. The internalisation of colonialisms rooted either in the deafness model of Oralism or also in the petit-bourgeois mentality of mission-ism, both in the BDA and outside, therefore hinders the chances of new generations of Deaf children finding an enlarged Deafhood identity and even their place in the Deaf world. Thus, in an era requiring urgent responses to cochlea implants, mainstreaming and genetics, a continuation of 'The Fear' threatens the community's very existence.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The chapter provides an issue-based summary of what has emerged from the study, proceeds to discuss the implications of that data, and outlines further areas for research.

The Deaf community has seldom been adequately described; however the study, based on subaltern data and a subaltern-researcher approach, offers real possibilities for understanding.

8.1 VALIDATION OF DEAF CULTURE CONCEPT

The informants' perspectives and attitudes combine to give a sense of a socially complex community with its own beliefs, norms and values which can be traced through historical time. Internal contestations within the culture also appear to form coherent patterns and dynamics. Appreciation of these manifestations, together with cultural characteristics such as endogamy, described in 4.6.1, and the conclusion in 3.6.1 that any group with its own language must have its own culture, confirms that 'British Deaf Culture' is a valid concept.

8.2 IMPLICATIONS OF VALIDATION

Confirmation of Deaf culture then establishes that Deaf communities have worldviews of their own which are both internally coherent and valid. The colonialist disregard for these worldviews was initially predicated on a denial that Deaf people actually had a language with which to think. Once linguistic status was conceded, this ideology had to be replaced by a denial that this worldview was collectively generated, coherent, or worthy of respect.

Linguistic recognition cannot per se demolish this argument. But once the existence of

Deaf culture is confirmed, then cultural relativity can be brought into play, so that the idea that Deaf worldviews are of at least equal value to those of their colonisers can be sustained. Indeed, in Deaf or Deaf-related domains, these worldviews may be of greater importance because they are based on experience.

Acknowledging Deaf culture implies two further concepts. The pathological 'deafness' model being centred on *individualism*, each Deaf person within it is treated as an atomistic being. The 'Deafhood' model, however, acknowledges the *collectivity* of Deaf self-perception, as exemplified throughout Chapters 5, 6 and 7, and which can also be found within other societies - e.g. African and Asian cultures.

This collectivity results in a concept of the Deaf individual as an *organic* being - an individual engaged in a dialectical relationship with a community and culture, who is influenced by that culture and in turn has a desire to influence it. This organic being contains individual dispositions and strategies shaped by the range of possibilities within that culture. However, all of the individuals in the group have a concern for and a commitment to, the present and future health of that community and culture.

In considering policies to be applied to Deaf domains, this organic, collective concern therefore forms a core belief to be acted on. This has implications for the following domains.

8.2.1 Deaf Education

The partial changes made within this domain in the last decade can bring only partial improvement in Deaf children's educational achievements and psycho-social development. Significant advances can only be made when the schools themselves become 'Deaf-centred'; that is, acknowledging that Deaf children and adults, as suggested in Chapter 5, have their own ways of thinking about and constructing the world. Full success in reaching those children's minds can only be attained according to the following conditions:

(i) Acceptance that those minds work differently to their own.

(ii) Acceptance that these workings may be equally, if not more valid as a basis for Deaf education.

(iii) Recognition that education is the primary site of Deaf concerns for the health and quality of their community's future. Thus concern for the individual Deaf child is dual-focused - as an individual in their own right, and as someone who can function well enough to enrich and maintain that community.

(iv) Acceptance therefore of the Deaf community's primary responsibility for devising strategies for reaching and drawing out Deaf children, and for shaping their Deafhood towards maximal participation in both Deaf and hearing communities.

In summary - official recognition of the existence of Deaf culture implies the taking of an irrevocable step forward - decolonisation of the education system by transferring control to the Deaf community.

8.2.2 Other Domains

Acceptance of the validity of the collective Deaf way of life, as indicated in Chapter 6, implies also that the entire range of administration of Deaf communities, from social work to mental hospitals to court and legal practices, cannot function efficiently without operating from a Deaf-centred worldview, and stipulations similar to (i) - (iv) above. This also applies to Deaf televisual media, to lay people learning BSL, to parents of Deaf children, and to Deaf organisations themselves.

8.2.3 Deaf Community Domains

Chapter 2 illustrated how the last 20 years has seen a surge in Deaf confidence and pride, partly due to the revelation of the intellectual complexities of their languages. However, as Chapter 4 showed, this has only partly carried over to respect for the intellectual quality of the opinions and beliefs expressed in those languages. Full acceptance of the fact of possessing their own culture offer the tools for beginning the

process of decolonising their own minds from the medical and social-welfare models.

This process necessitates Deaf self-examination of their own organisations and social structures in order to ascertain which cultural features are internally generated, which imposed from without, and which originating from without, have come to be seen, erroneously, as Deafhood traditions. The group forums in Chapter 1 suggested that such self-examination is both feasible and welcomed. If developed successfully, openings can then be created for an assertive Deaf entrance into other domains where physical colonisation is institutionalised. This process is examined further in 8.7.6.

However, before that can take place, the externally derived concept of 'Deaf Culture' has to be reconciled with the community's own equivalent terms and semantic codes, as Bahan (1994) pointed out. If these are not the starting point for self-examination, so that the 'Deaf Culture' term is not explained by reference to those concepts, then it remains an external imposition, no matter how well-meaning, and only limited success may be possible.

8.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR DEAF CULTURAL THEORY

The five weaknesses in present Deaf cultural analysis described in 4.4.10 have been addressed as follows:

Chapter 5, 6, and 7 suggest that Deaf culture may well be nation-specific, so that much more research into other Deaf cultures is required before one can assess the advisability of attempting cross-national generalisations about the term 'Deaf culture'. As suggested in Chapter 3, when the very recent field of diasporic theory is developed, it may be possible to utilise some of these tools to identify commonalities which could inform the development of a central 'core' of cultural identity, similar to those being attempted for the 'Black Atlantic' and for Jewish culture.

The chapters above also indicates the central importance of a diachronic approach to British Deaf culture - present-day manifestations cannot be understood without being

grounded in an explication of traditional social patterns traced forward through historical time. As Chapter 7 indicates, the present attitudes of the hierarchy of the BDA are seen by some subaltern Deaf as conditioned by the social patterns formed in oralist schools and missioner-run clubs. Further research along such lines would enable the development of more sophisticated theories concerning the process of cultural change itself.

The weakness of homogenity has been partly addressed by the identification of class-like features within British Deaf culture in Chapter 6; some of the data also stresses the importance of age as an important socio-cultural marker. This suggests that other variables such as race, gender and sexual orientation should also be factored into Deaf cultural theory. Future Deaf educational and social-welfare research which does not factor in such variables may therefore fail validity criteria.

Chapters 6 and 7 also suggests that taxonomic approaches are limited - British Deaf life is clearly permeated by the culture of the majority society. Many of the forms within and around which Deaf cultural action moves in these chapters, are either modelled or resemble wider British culture. What marks the culture as distinct are the different expressions, dispositions and strategies, and the different cultural weighting each carries. In order to produce useful data, it is therefore necessary to frame Deaf cultural theory within an exploration of the epistemological processes of Deaf communities themselves.

Adopting a commitment to a rigorous ethnography and to transparency and subjective reflexivity also avoids the dangers of prescriptivism. By illustrating the varying responses of Deaf subalterns to oppression in the domains of school and club, the data confirms the relevance of Bourdeiu's assessment of culture as containing 'fields' which generate their own influence on the 'habitus' of Deaf people, whose cultural responses are therefore 'dispositional'.

This contrasts with analyses which perceive Deaf culture as determined by a simple 'base-superstructure' framing, and with accounts which seek to reify a simple essentialist approach, as adopted by the cultural nationalists criticised by Parsons in Chapter 4.

However, one should note that these approaches are in themselves cultural manifestations, and could be studied as such, thus bringing them within a Deaf cultural framework.

8.4 DEAFHOOD AND DEAF CULTURAL THEORY

Throughout Chapters 2, 5, 6, and 7, Deaf subaltern have indicated a desire not to be restricted by the parameters of the 'deafness' trope. However, as we have seen, there has been little conceptual 'space' available to them to create terms for their own alternative self-concept. The development of the Deafhood term, however, offers a space within which Deaf cultural beliefs and values can be articulated, collected, and examined. Not only is this important in its own right, but it also represents a counterbalancing *positivity* to the negative atmosphere existing within pathological and social-welfare domains. This harmonises well with emerging work such as Griggs (1998), which explores 'Deaf wellness' as an alternative to the traditional focus on 'Deaf mental health problems'.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the data chapters is the extent to which individuals and groups have been reaching towards realising what might be termed 'Full-Deaf' positions in both their individual and collective lives. Some of the themes which manifest 'strivings towards Deafhood' are examined in 8.6 below - the socio-political implications of accepting this construct have been set out in 8.2.

8.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR WIDER CULTURAL THEORY

One major criticism (cf LeCompte, Millroy and Preissle, 1992) of both anthropology and critical ethnography is that the many descriptive accounts are rarely drawn together to create cultural theories. This section attempts to redress that weakness by suggesting directions which might be pursued.

Although it is too soon to assess the implications of Deaf cultural theory for cultural theory in general, the data does offer some useful indications. Concerning

anthropology, the importance of disposition and strategy in Deaf culture indicates support for processual models of culture, but more research is needed before it is possible to confirm the prioritisation of either adaptational or ideational frameworks - at present a case can be offered for both.

With regard to the former, Bhabha's (1994) assertion of the importance of subversive mimicry as a form of resistance practiced by the colonised, and Bohannen's similar concept of 're-contextualising', resonate for a Deaf community greatly outnumbered and penetrated by a majority culture. In this respect, Brydon (1995) notes that one of the strongest forms of resistance to colonialism has been the development of ideas by the colonised of their own nationhood (the 'Lakota Nation, the 'Black Nation' etc). Thus, Anderson's concept of nations as 'imagined communities' (1983) indicates that mentalist theories of culture may be especially relevant for minority groups.

Bohannen's theories of cultural change, traps and dissonance do appear to be relevant for Deaf culture. Indeed it may be that they are more suitable for examination of minority cultures in general, where cultural issues are more pressing and thus more visible on the 'surface' than in the huge dispersed nation-state cultures.

In respect of Cultural Studies, the data would appear merely to confirm the importance of theories of ideology and hegemony rather than to add to them. When considered in conjunction with Post-Colonial theories, however, an important and relatively new dimension emerges. Various dispositions and strategies within the data indicate patterns which can be hypothesised as *marking a distinction in cultural theory* between 'majority cultures' and 'minority cultures'. These are now explored.

8.6 THE 'STRUCTURE OF FEELING' OF DEAF AND MINORITY CULTURES

It seems plausible that Deaf cultures express aspects of Williams' 'structures of feeling', which may be paralleled within other minority cultures. Some of these may also be relevant for majority cultures, but have much less resonance there.

8.6.1 Minority Cultures as Bi-polar and Oppositional

It can be argued that the characteristic which distinguishes minority cultures from others is precisely that minority positioning. Minority cultures exist within a bi-polar framework, where their own cultural 'core' is subsumed by an opposing cultural force. The daily lives of minority individuals are therefore characterised by forces and impulses which pull them towards one or other of these poles; these then affect the groups' cultural strategies, which Wrigley has described as the 'tension between resistance and compliance' (1996: 11). We have seen these manifested in the Deaf 'class' issues of Chapter 6 and in the dynamics described by Ray and Ken in Chapter 7, whilst within Black discourse, Du Bois (1989) has characterised this as 'double consciousness'. From this perspective, therefore, the existential reality of minority cultures is inevitably characterised by degrees of *oppositionality*.

Although the description above can be sensed when 'reading' various minority cultures, there seem to be no formal theories which make this explicit; this study is thus an initial step towards formalising these concepts.

8.6.2 Discourses and Representations within Bi-polar Structures

Deaf and other minority cultures can be deconstructed to reveal polarised discourses and others which consequently develop, as outlined in 2.3. The initial colonial impulse was represented as two sets of discourses - majority colonialist discourses and those of the colonised subaltern.

Once it becomes expedient for colonialist discourses to co-opt selected members of the colonised, a third intermediate discourse develops. This is the site within which discourses about the treatment and administration of the colonised takes place. However, only certain elite subaltern are permitted access to these sites, and by definition on terms laid down by the colonialists, as Dorothy and Ken illustrated in Chapter 5.

The data chapters reveal a further development of this model. Once the decolonisation process begins, whether impelled by subaltern forces or by changes in the majority culture, that intermediate discourse is then challenged by subaltern forces and their allies. Growing professionalisation, whether among Deaf and other minority subaltern, then sees a fourth discourse develop among that 'class'. This is characterised in part by discussion about how to transform the intermediate discourse and by attempts, for example, to consciously determine what 'Deaf' might mean as a tool to be utilised in that transformation. We have seen in Chapters 6 and 7 how Ray and Ken's thinking exemplified that process.

However, in so doing, a new cultural 'space' is also opened up within the 'traditional' subaltern Deaf/minority discourse as this new group of subaltern-elite attempts to discuss these issues with the other subaltern Deaf. Within this space discourses begin to emerge concerning wider Deaf/minority priorities, and which factors might be involved in redefining themselves and their community. Dorothy and Ken's attempts to work within the modern BDA is just one example of this development.

The extent to which the subaltern-elite can still be considered subaltern is under contention within post-colonial theory. Spivak (1996) suggests that the moment that the subaltern can speak, they are no longer subaltern; however, the data in this study suggests that the situation is much more complex.

8.6.3 Minority Cultures and Collective Selfhood

Virtually all the informants cited reveal a profound sense in which Deaf people conceive

of themselves in the plural - it seemed that the words 'we' and 'Deaf' were felt to be almost inseperable. This collective selfhood may be a product of oppression in modern society (it is too early to generalise to tribal societies), and thus an important feature of other minority cultures. If this were so, then one might expect to find this collectivity breaking down as oppression lessens, and further research might confirm this hypothesis.

8.6.4 Colonialism and Internal Cultural Dissension

Colonialist strategies such as the creation of compliant status groups and the drawing of discourse boundaries according to their own priorities appears to result in the development of highly charged internal cultural dissension among the colonised, as seen in Chapter 4. Externally imposed structures as 'deafness' thus establish a legacy which result in increased tension between the colonised the closer they come to independence and the ensuing responsibility and power which that implies. As Ken's observations in Chapter 7 implied, the BDA's leaders' reproduction of old cultural patterns in the post-Deaf resurgence era is the more fraught because the stakes are now higher - patterns which served to run Deaf sporting events and trips for old people have to be re-thought for the running of a national socio-political organisation.

Fanon (1986), Pityana *et al* (1991), hooks (1989) and Gilroy (1993a and b) indicate that similar patterns can be found in Black communities on several continents, whilst Churchill (1994) describes an equivalent within Native American communities. Thus these may be a characteristic of minority cultures in general.

8.6.5 Oralism, Colonialism and Totalitarianism

In this respect it should be noted that although there has been considerable focus on Oralism in the study, it appears that the more pertinent theoretical framework is that of colonialism. Once control of Deaf people is ceded to majority society, the pedagogical conditional is brought into play. It is therefore theoretically possible that Deaf schools might teach via sign language, yet be as repressive of Deaf culture and development as 'missionary schools' in other continents (Churchill, 1994). Oralism is thus best

conceived as an especially totalitarian form of colonialism, perhaps akin to schools for First Nation children where eradication of the native culture has often been an explicit goal. Both Oralism and the Deaf response to it in Chapters 2 and 5 therefore offer useful data for the development of cultural theory in respect of minority education.

8.6.6 Minority Cultures, Pressures and Self-definition

One effect of experiencing the opposing cultural force of a majority is summarised by Bhabha's adaptation of Benjamin (1994) as 'the state of emergency in which [minority cultures] live is not the exception, but the rule'. It is necessary to develop cultural theory founded on this insight.

One aspect of this phenomenon, both within the data and among some other minority cultures is the concept of *pressure*. Among its manifestations are the pressure from both cultural poles to define one's self to their satisfaction, and to choose allegiances, as exemplified in 8.6.2 and 8.6.4. Demands to make such choices are exacerbated by the amount of external pressure implicit in definitions of colonial oppression, since there is *insufficient relief from that pressure* to create the space required to make choices in one's own time and according to one's own agendas. Pryce (1979) illustrates this well in his study of Afro-Caribbean culture; the title itself 'Endless Pressure' demonstrates the importance of the concept.

The pressure from both poles also exacerbates the condition of self-division and self-doubt, and the energy required to suppress these also takes its toll on both the group and individual; in turn the pressure to create one's own self-definitions that may relieve that pressure also increases. As Chapter 5 illustrated, the negative cultural influences of Oralism create greater pressure in the Deaf resurgence period where Deaf actions now carry more weight and responsibility. Although there is still room for a range of individual dispositions and strategies to exist, these are nevertheless caught within the bi-polar dynamics which operate on their habitus. This may explain why so many of the accounts of Deaf culture in Chapter 4 have focused on issues around membership and self-definition.

8.6.7 The Pressures of Unity

These pressures appear to extend to the limited cultural space available for dissent, since unity in the face of opposition is a commonly expressed imperative in minority cultures, operating even at the expense of resistance or action, in Black communities (Gilroy, 1993b: 3), and within the Deaf community, as evidenced in Chapters 5 and 6.

Furthermore, since a minority community is necessarily made up of an extremely heterogenous population which would not normally be forced into proximity; the pressure to create unity is therefore increased whilst simultaneously being rendered more difficult to achieve.

8.6.8 The Pressures of Prescriptivism and Essentialism

One characteristic of minority cultures is the extent to which they have to resist majority cultural prescriptions of who or what they should be; without that resistance, cultural change will occur in one direction only - towards the majority culture by osmosis. Consequently there is cultural pressure to reject all aspects of majority culture in order to maintain one's own, even to the detriment of one's own cultural development, as evidenced by some Black nationalism (Fanon, 1968). Similarly, as Ray and Harry's disagreement in 7.3.1 illustrates, some of the Deaf constructions develop cultural forms which are rationalised as 'Deaf', yet perpetuate the oppression. These are examples of cultural 'double binds', and are explored in 8.6.12, whilst prescriptivism itself is examined more closely in 8.7.3.

The pressure towards rejection also impels the search for minority identity which is often cast in essentialist terms. Non-Deaf minorities appear to be passing through this stage (Walby, 1990; Gilroy, 1993b; etc.), whereas Deaf communities, as evidenced by Chapter 4, are still either caught up in it, or trying to resolve it (Chapter 7). Thus it may well be that Spivak's 'strategic essentialism' represents a useful concept for 'cooling' the Deaf debate .

8.6.9 Multiple Identities, Selfhood and Hybridity

The post-modernist development of the concept of multiple subjectivities has begun to inform the thinking of some minority-cultural groups, and the concept of hybrid identities is developing as a potentially positive self-image for groups living with majority cultural permeation (Bhabha, 1994). This is also a very recent development within the British Deaf community (*Sign On*, 1998).

However, compared to majority cultures, the bi-polar construction of necessity implies a much larger 'cultural distance' between core subjectivities. In white male society, for example, the distance between one's identity within the tropes of white, male and British is much less than the distance between white and Black, male and female, or Hearing and Deaf. This distance means that connectivity of identities, and of 'in-between' identities is difficult for many to accept. Pressure to repress certain of one's multiple subjectivities is thus much greater, so that exploration of this subject within minority studies is charged with a greater resonance and tension (hooks, 1989). Given the experiences described in Chapters 5 and 6, very few of the Deaf informants were comfortable with the idea that they might in any way have what they saw as a 'Hearing' identity. Further exploration of the subject, if given a higher priority, might serve to reduce that tension, and also serve as a comparison point for other minority cultures.

8.6.10 Self-actualisation

One characteristic noticeable throughout the data was the importance given to the process of 'becoming Deaf'. The small percentage of Deaf people who receive Deaf enculturation through family life has parallels with 'sexual preference' minorities whose identity is also actualised in the face of a differently-oriented upbringing. Members of other minorities, especially those whose parents have attempted to assimilate into majority culture, may also experience similar desires or peer group challenges to 'become more Black/Native American' etc. Furthermore, as Dorothy and others indicated, maintaining one's subaltern identity in the face of different external pressures

manifesting in different eras, together with the pressures of aging, etc, means that the actualisation process is a lifelong one.

There is another dimension, as Ray and Ken illustrated, where questions are posed about actually developing and extending what 'becoming Deaf' might mean, especially after experiencing the two colonising domains which sought to suppress or limit any understanding of what this might entail.

In this context, 'Deafhood' is a useful concept to encompass all forms of actualisation aspirations, whether maintenance or development, and study of its equivalents in minority cultures might well prove fruitful.

8.6.11 The '1001 Victories' Hypothesis

The data reveals substantial numbers of examples to support this hypothesis, especially within the Deaf subaltern groups in Chapter 6 who found themselves with little room for maneouvre. It may well be that this concept has resonance within other minority cultures, where scope for self-expression and collective action is similarly limited. The Black scholar Gilroy's (1993a) concept of 'small acts', appertaining to the Afro-Caribbean community, would appear to confirm this; thus further research might be illuminating.

8.6.12 The 'Double Bind' Hypothesis

During the course of this study, numerous situations were observed which appeared to place minority cultural members and their allies in strategy dilemmas resembling 'no-win' situations. The data reflects the range of situations involved - Deaf children wishing to better their education facing rejection by their peers, Deaf rebels protesting missioner actions facing ostracism by their community, or elite subaltern desiring to object facing withdrawal of privileges or status by the hearing people holding power over them.

These dynamics may be unique to minority cultures, since the underlying characteristic seems to be one of being trapped in positions where one can find it difficult to side with the oppressors or to support some of the actions taken by one's own people. Cultural forms thus developed may simultaneously enable people to cope with social conditions and limit their ability to change them, as is classically illustrated in Willis' (1977) study of working-class schoolboys. Similarly, the 'Hill-Thomas' case, where the latter, a Black nominee for the Supreme Court, was accused by the former, also Black, of sexual harassment, resulted in huge media coverage and posed a major dilemma for Black Americans - to support a Black man under attack from white America and condone his putative crime - or to condemn him, and side with the white 'oppressors' (e.g. Morrison (ed), 1992). In the Deaf case, these might be summarised as being trapped between 'deafness' and 'Deafhood' impulses. The result seems to be an increase of confusion and pressure in and around minority cultures, resulting in damage to cultural unity.

These appear to refine Bohannen's (1995) theory of 'cultural traps', which I suggest can be represented for minority cultures as the 'Double-Bind Theory'; this appears to offer a fruitful direction for further research.

8.6.13 The Historical Dimension and the Historical Self

The data from this study illustrates the importance of understanding the past before present-day culture can make sense. However, although this historical dimension is important, even central to any culture, there seem to be few formal explorations or hypotheses concerning the operation of this dynamic.

Nevertheless, when examining minority cultures in particular it is noticeable that, at a certain point in their resurgence, history becomes uniquely important and takes on a much more conscious and explicit role. Of course, reclaiming a suppressed history is an inevitable part of cultural rebuilding and self-liberation; however, what is still not yet clear is the precise role of this 'historical self' in forming such positive self-images. The data suggests that colonialism has destroyed most of the historical continuity of the Deaf community, so that it is harder to actually place onesself within that framework unless

one has experienced not only Deaf parents, but Deaf grandparents. Attempts to (re)construct the historical self must therefore inevitably involve conscious strategising, such as those suggested by Norma and Harry; one might imagine that introducing Deaf 'grandparents' to young Deaf children might constitute one such strategy.

Additionally, 8.2.3 and 8.7.6 begin to illustrate cultural redevelopment; looking at who one is and what has shaped this inevitably calls upon history and brings it into everyday consciousness. Further research into this dimension would appear to be particularly important.

8.6.14 Summary - Minority Culture Implications for Cultural Theory

Many of the examples above suggest that an altogether different definition of culture might be proposed. Rather than seeing it as an entity constructed by the acts of bounded groups, it may be better understood, as Quantz (1992) suggests, as 'a contested terrain rather than as a set of shared patterns', where culture is not so much 'the area of social life where people share understandings as that area where people struggle over understandings' (p.487). Although this construct may inform majority cultural experience, it seems to be particularly visible in minority cultures, as illustrated by the 'class' oriented data in Chapter 6, or the disagreements between Ray, Harry and Stefan. Research exploring such dynamics in minority cultures, where the 'struggle over understandings' is exacerbated by majority-cultural impositions of their versions of 'understanding', might well prove to have significant implications for cultural theory in general.

8.7 METHODOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

8.7.1 'Studying Up' and Futurology

It would appear that the study validates the concept of subaltern and other research 'studying up'. In this case it suggests the usefulness of turning the colonial gaze back towards the colonisers' own actions and rationalisations. In so doing, the data yield is

effectively doubled as two strata of information are revealed. The first concerns views of one's own situation, and the second the attitudes of those in higher positions, as experienced and interpreted by the subaltern group. As the data in Chapter 6 reveals, the Deaf subaltern have a good grasp of the behaviour and values of the 'middle-class' Deaf, and also how to transcend them. By contrast, the 'middle-class' group seem unaware of how their behaviour affects the subaltern group and how they are regarded by that group.

This dynamic seems to apply to other minorities - women, ethnic minorities and so on. As Dubois (1989) and others indicate, minority groups have to know how the majority culture works in order to survive and sidestep its worst effects; there is no comparable need or impulse in the case of white and male majorities.

The two-tier structure of studying up also offers potential for further studies based either on Bohannen's futurology concept, or a more neo-Marxist reading of the discrepancies between potentiality and actuality (cf Adorno, in Quantz, 1992). These would indicate how oppression leads minorities, especially their elite subalterns, to impose limitations on their own self-definitions and thus their potential, as illustrated by the clashes in Chapter 7 between Ray and his Deaf club.

8.7.2 Subaltern-Researcher Implications

It would appear that taking a subaltern-researcher approach to the study may have justified itself in terms of the quantity and quality of data unearthed which is new to Deaf Studies. However, to generalise further would be risky; it would be glib to suppose that any subaltern could simply produce such work. Perhaps the most useful conclusion is that many subalterns could be ethnographically trained in participant observation techniques, but to augment these by a carefully developed use of their own introspections and interpretations. From there they can utilise two other essential characteristics of subaltern research - the trust of their informants and consequently their access to deeper levels of information.

Nevertheless, this study revealed some potential dangers for subaltern-researchers. One concerned catalytic validity. I found myself constantly desiring not only to identify the problems and issues around Deaf culture, but wishing to 'solve' them as well. This affected my ability to simply observe. Likewise, although this impulse helped inform a study focused on powerful culturo-political data, this did not permit study of simple 'positive' Deaf cultural behaviour, and may have resulted in an unbalanced picture.

8.7.3 The Language of Interpretation

The study has reinforced a belief held by some practitioners that a major part of the problem inherited from the pathological discursive system is that not only has it disguised the fact that its work is merely interpretative, but in so doing has created a reductionist linguistic register with which to write about Deaf people. I have attempted to use language and dimensions in this study which write Deaf people 'larger' - ie nearer to the emotional 'size' of a community with such unique national, international and historical dimensions. Indeed, it is suggested that future accounts of Deaf communities must address the question of interpretative language as a matter of urgency. This applies also to subaltern-researchers; without a firm grasp of a wider political picture, their own work may simply mirror the reductionist registers of the medical and social control models.

Indeed, it is noticeable that from the beginnings of the Deaf resurgence, activists have attempted to borrow salient contemporary tropes in order to draw the attention of majority society to Oralism and other abuses; 'linguistic minority', 'community', 'genocide', 'child abuse', 'nation' and 'colony' and now 'culture'. However, only the first two have gained consistent acceptance and use either by academics or Deaf organisations - the others are still expressed in reductionist vocabulary like 'increased Deaf awareness'.

These themes are of particular importance for the future shaping of Deaf Studies, where it can be argued that the discipline should not be focused on teaching 'facts', but on transforming students' own constructions and interpretations to embrace the widest

possible dimensions. In order to achieve this, the discipline has to focus on what these might be, and how their present interpretations still contain the colonialist 'seeds', in order to best equip both Deaf and hearing people to work in and around a post-colonial Deaf society, rather than just fulfilling academic quotas.

8.7.4 Prescriptivism and Cultural Relativism

A related academic legacy of colonialism is prescriptivism. Although it may apply to some other minorities, it seems particularly prevalent in the deafness domain, and may be a legacy of the pedagogical conditional. Two examples may suffice - the attitude of oralists and others that 'the history of the Deaf is the history of the education of the Deaf' (Hodgson, 1953) and the way in which Deaf television programming on both BBC and Channel 4 is subsumed under their Education Departments (not the case for disability programming, which is consequently more overtly political). Such deployment may see itself as a step forwards from categorisation under 'health' / 'defectology' / 'communication disorders'; however, its partial step reveals an inherent liberalism at its core.

A similar liberalism is manifested by those recoiling from the idea that Deaf oppression should be clearly framed. Responses such as 'it's too negative - it makes Deaf people look helpless' indicates an inability to see the positivity or 'heroism' inherent in rebellion and survival which Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate. By contrast it would be inconceivable for other minority studies not to centralise slavery, the 'Indian Wars', or witchburning. Rejection of these as 'political not cultural' risks cultural descriptions being not only incomplete but fundamentally erroneous. Given the extent to which this is realised within other disciplines, as the work of Bourdieu, Foucault, Hall and others has demonstrated, the incorporation of such thinking would appear to be overdue for the academic domains of Deaf education, Deaf social work, and the medical disciplines.

In a similar vein, Chapter 3 illustrated how attempts to ratify the Deaf cultural concept have met with attempts to refute parallels between Deaf and other minority communities by locating and highlighting differences. It would appear more useful to see differences

between Deaf, Black, Gay and female minorities as marking important clues which can *refine* each's distinctive qualities rather than invalidate them.

Another form of prescriptivism illustrated in the chapter concerned responses that can be summarised as 'that can't be Deaf culture because other cultures have this also'. This failure to recognise that claims are not being made for the uniqueness of the feature in question but for its cultural weighting, not only reflects the failure to understand culture as a structure of relationships as Bohannen and Bourdieu have illustrated, but, as with all the examples in this section, suggest a (possibly subconscious) attempt to suppress Deaf subaltern emergence.

Prescriptivism also informs the apparently laudable desire to see Deaf culture purely in and of itself, and not just as 'reacting to Hearing culture'. However the fear that Deaf culture may be seen as reactional fails to recognise the possibility that to be oppositional is not simply to react per se; rather oppositionality colours, informs, deepens and even enriches many cultural features. Levine (1977) has illustrated that the spiritual practices within Black churches may carry greater resonance primarily because of their inspirational transmuting of Christian texts in order to endure or transcend oppression, a dimension lacking in most white religious worship. This extra dimension might be rendered for minority cultures as 'majority culture - *plus*'.

Thus the search for models, prescriptive or otherwise, may be recognised as a majority cultural dynamic in itself. This also applies within Deaf minority culture; images and terms such as 'family', 'village', and 'home' should be perceived as tropes to be deconstructed in future studies.

Nevertheless, whilst linguistic relativity is more or less accepted, cultural relativity remains problematic. Oppressed cultures can also be read as damaged cultures, especially if it can be shown that individuals and groups have been forced to inhabit limited normative realms. This is one reason why some minority cultures have resisted exposure of cultural 'weaknesses' (in so doing unfortunately limiting the amount of data available for cross-minority study). Such fears may also underlie the views expressed

by liberals, above. However some minority theorists, especially feminists, have constructed arguments to illustrate the extent to which majority cultures are actually damaged by dualistic and self-alienated perspectives which motivate their oppression of minorities. Such theories may assist in resisting liberal fears and in constructing a model of Deaf culture which asserts cultural relativity positively.

In the interests of transparency it is also important to point out that I found myself to have absorbed this same prescriptivism; parallelling the desire to solve expressed in 8.7.2 was the impulse not simply to observe Deaf behaviour but to intervene with what is called 'DEAF-SHOULD' attitudes. My solution to this was to focus on Deaf cultural issues which attempted to examine or manifest this, as evidenced in the accounts given by Albert, Ray, Ken and others.

8.7.5 Typicality and Academic Validity

Judgement sampling raises questions around typicality and validity, and requires for this study that we satisfactorily locate and account for the perspectives expressed by subaltern rebels like Ray, Dorothy and Ken. This is best addressed by acknowledging that cultural members have their own theories about what they perceive and what they are doing, and to see the data not as statements about reality but *as part of the reality being studied*. Thus it is not necessary to 'believe' them, so much as to register their existence as cultural or personal rationale, and to present them as a series of hypotheses for further research. Viewed collectively, they may also be hypothesised as contributing to an overarching set of perspectives; one such concept being Bourdieu's 'folk theories' (1986).

8.7.6 Cultural Consciousness Forums

Both the methodology employed here and the type of data revealed strongly suggest that a next step for research and catalytic validity might be the construction of 'cultural consciousness forums', in which subalterns might examine their Deaf experiences in order to understand and validate them, and thus to extend their Deafhood.

During such a process, developing an understanding of how colonialism has shaped their own responses also enables the beginnings of a deconstruction of Deaf cultural features to reveal the extent to which certain traditional 'Deaf ways' are but internalised colonial features. Experiencing this process would thus enable a clearing of cultural 'space', offering a sense of liberation and confidence that might lead to action and conscious cultural renewal.

Possible Deafhood exercises might include envisioning Deaf (and hearing) worlds where Oralism had never happened, and exploring differences between these and the contemporary situation. Likewise, exploration of which Deaf people are selected for co-option into colonialist structures might enable a greater awareness of patterns and dynamics found there, and how they might be resisted.

Such cultural consciousness forums might also circumvent the problem found in other post-colonial movements and 'cultural nationalists', where a simplistic notion of 'Deaf Pride' leaves underlying patterns intact and thus at risk of replacing Hearing oppression by a Deaf one. This is of especial importance in an era of mainstreaming, since Deaf culture may not survive in a historically transmitted and coherent form without some degree of focus on a 'cultural core'. Re-directing respect for this core and its traditions, and teaching it to new generations without developing an over-emphasis on cultural nationalism is of particular importance.

The forums also offer a potential site to draw out the positive aspects of Deaf cultural experience, to counterbalance the 'negative' features which for reasons of space have dominated this study, as well as explore the extent to which present day attitudes to potential hearing allies, such as parents of Deaf children have been shaped by their own experience of Oralism.

8.7.7 Catalytic Validity and Deaf Access to Study

Creating access for lay people to the final ethnographic text, is one of the challenges of

catalytic validity. In the case of the Deaf community, the combination of low English literacy and the suitability of video as a medium for sign language transmission suggests that serious thought should be given to translation of the text to video as an inextricable requirement of Deaf research and funding resources.

8.8 SUMMARY - ADDITIONAL DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The situation which confronts Deaf Studies is that external funding is very rarely made available for Deaf-centred research (as opposed to deafness research, or research on BSL etc where hearing people are the intended beneficiaries). Furthermore, there is no consideration given to the translation of this material into BSL texts - ie video - so that Deaf access is limited to face-to-face tuition. Where there is some Deaf input into research priorities, the 'state of emergency' described above means that Deaf cultural research is considered something of a luxury best reserved for 'peacetime'. However, the need to clarify the concept and its implications is also urgent, given the rapid dissemination of the term in advance of studies which explore its meanings.

In this situation, acceptance of the existence of Deaf culture opens a 'Pandora's Box' - a new field of study in which it is arguable that a multitude of research projects are necessary. However, five guiding principles can be identified:

The urgency of identifying Deafhood approaches in domains where there has been some limited Deaf entrance, namely those in 8.2, especially regarding 'Deaf ways' of teaching Deaf children.

One unfortunate side-effect of the urgency of clarifying 'Deaf culture'. is that it encourages research to be constructed in dualistic form - 'Deaf Ways' versus 'Hearing Ways'. This needs to be counterbalanced by research which can identify multiplicity and range of viewpoints and dispositions within Deaf culture. In this respect, priority should also given to studies with catalytic validity, possibily through Cultural Consciousness Forums, with specific reference to empowering Deaf people to conduct

their own research, and with training opportunities provided.

Research should also bear in mind the importance of perceiving Deaf community and culture as a collective entity. Strategies devised must therefore seek to draw on those collective resources in an active manner, attempting to encourage a create a national cultural climate based on the spirit of enquiry.

Recognising the importance of collective Deafhood unity to the cultural health of the community is also necessary; research which explores the cultural dynamics within Deaf club life, and within Deaf organisations is important to maintaining that unity in an era where communities in general are becoming fragmented. As Chapter 2 illustrated, this fragmentation is exacerbated by the increasing numbers of subaltern elite and consequent increased misunderstanding and ill-feeling as exemplified in the sign 'GRASS-ROOTS-OUT'. Urgent research is required to assist each section of the community to understand the process and attempt re-unification strategies. A similar case can be made for understanding the different cultural needs of Deaf young people and ethnic Deaf people, and for devising strategies which enable those 'lost' in mainstreamed education to find their way 'back' into the Deaf community.

Finally, the recent ascendancy of pathological models also requires a prioritised response. Given the rapid dissemination of cochlear implants, there is an urgent need to assess these from a Deafhood perspective. Similarly the intense interest within genetic engineering in locating and eradicating 'Deaf genes' confronts Deaf communities with the need to penetrate existing discourses with a public justification for their continued existence. There is a need therefore for cultural research which can highlight such features in order to underpin the Deaf case.

In a textbook on BSL in 1988, I wrote 'for the first time, the hearing public on a wide scale are active participants in the struggle for final recognition or obliteration of the deaf community and British Sign Language' (p.43). In the decade since, the pathological model has sharpened its tools. Validation of Deaf culture now provides a sharpened tool for the social model as the struggle intensifies. However, the huge

disparency in the 'size' of the tools and the resources which drive them is something which the academy must now recognise in order to accept its moral responsibility to establish the level playing field which supposedly underpins ideas of a genuinely democratic research and education system.

Ultimately, in order to inspire research in these directions, one might do well to reflect on the remarkably positive example set by Deaf communities in the data. The re-emerging pride in the survival and resurgence of their unique languages and artforms from a century-long oppression that might have decimated other cultures, is augmented by their similarly unique national and international dimensions, and by their sense of what they can contribute to the colour and diversity of human life. The search for Deafhood, then, may enrich us all.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF INITIAL QUESTIONS AND TOPIC AREAS PRESENTED TO DEAF INFORMANTS

The questions which follow are those which were used to conduct or guide the very first interviews. New directions and themes which emerged from the responses were either pursued at the time or used in later interviews to hone in on those topics.

0. DEAF CULTURAL PRE-INTERVIEW PROCESS

Observe the Deaf way when meeting informant - enquire after health, well being, follow any topics arising, establish mutual friends or experiences if have not met informant before. When they are relaxed, proceed to interview.

1. INTRODUCTION

Explain that this is only a discussion, and that you can change your mind later and let me know; likewise if any new ideas occur to you. We are just starting to open up the whole area of Deaf culture, to see what is inside, and we are all learning together, including me. So it's like a joint exploration. And strictly confidential, of course.

2. NEXT STEP

Follow whatever general topic is 'in the air'. This may have emerged in 0, above. When completed, (bring discussion to a close or the interview will never begin), move to questions and topic areas according to which feels right at that moment.

3. DEAF CULTURE TERMS

(i) What are the terms Deaf use to talk about their community?

(ii) What do you think about Deaf terms like DEAF-WAY, DEAF-HIS etc.? When would you use them and what do they mean to you?

(iii) What do you think about the sign DEAF-CULTURE? Or the hearing words from which it comes?

(iv) How do you decide what you think is DEAF-WAY or not?

4. DEAF CULTURAL FEATURES

(i) If Deaf people don't live close together, can they still be called a culture? Why don't we seem to want to live close together?

(ii) Some say the Deaf way is never to praise, but only to criticise. What do you think?

(iii) Some say Deaf people must share skills? Do you agree? Can you think of examples? What happens if you don't do this?

(iv) In the Deaf community, does the group decide what to do, or do leaders make the decisions? How does one get to be a leader? Is there any particular behaviour or qualities that makes somebody a leader? Is this different between young and older Deaf?

(v) Terms like PROPER-DEAF, REAL-DEAF. What do you see of these? When and where are they used? How does one decide who has Deaf culture? What about HARD-OF-HEARING? What about those from Deaf families who are 'hard of hearing'? What about if a Deaf person marries a hearing person? What about HEARING-MOTHER-FATHER-DEAF?

(vi) Do you think Deaf have special rituals related to birth, death, marriage etc.? Or views about these that are different from hearing views?

(vii) Some say Deaf Culture is different/no such thing because it's not passed from generation to generation. What's your view? [If person is from a Deaf family, use this to open up the whole topic of life from the Deaf-of-Deaf worldview.]

(viii) What about English and English skills? What are Deaf attitudes to these? What are your feelings about English?

(ix) What about Deaf attitudes to hearing people? What are your own feelings? Is Deaf culture based on attitudes to hearing people, or is it more based on what Deaf do together? What examples come to mind?

(x) Are we too sensitive to what hearing people think of us? How does this affect our lives? Do we want to prove we are equal to hearing people, or is it more

like 'DEAF-CAN'?

(xi) Is it part of Deaf culture not to like see Deaf thinking they are above others? How and when does this happen, and how does it manifest itself?

5. CULTURAL VARIATION

(i) Are Deaf people the same all over the UK? Are they different in your area? If so, how?

(ii) Black Deaf people - how do they fit in? [Question adapted if asked of Black Deaf person.] What about this debate at the moment - 'YOU FIRST, WHICH, DEAF OR BLACK?' What do you think about it?

(iii) Do Deaf have any different groups within the community, maybe with different signs used to label them? Do you know the term 'STUPID-DEAF'? Who are they and who uses it to describe them? What do you think of it yourself?

(iv) Are Deaf professionals 'less Deaf'? Do they behave differently? What's going on in the community between Deaf and those who are Deaf professionals? What do you think of the signs 'GRASS-ROOTS' and 'GRASS-ROOTS-OUT'?

(v) Young Deaf - are they learning to fit into Deaf community and culture, or what?

6. LANGUAGE ISSUES

(i) Do you think more Deaf now accept BSL as a language? What's your own view?

(ii) Has BSL research been important for the Deaf community? If so, in what ways?

7. NEXT STAGE

Wrap after asking if informant has anything they wish to add, how they have felt about the session and if they would like to do another one.